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Volume 8
Ninety Short Tales
of Love and Women
from the Arabic



SAHIB SAIKAT JUNG BAHADUR

EASTERN LOVE



NINETY SHORT TALES OF LOVE AND WOMEN FROM THE ARABIC



ENGLISH VERSIONS BY
E. POWYS MATHERS



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VOLUME VIII

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for
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MADE IN ENGLAND

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CONTENTS

1. *An Oath Evaded* 1
2. *The Wazir Saddled and Bridled* 3
3. *Marriage Advice* 4
4. *The Excuse which was worse than the Fault* 5
5. *The Guardian of his Master's Honour* 6
6. *Danger Remembered* 7
7. *The Repentance of Potiphar's Wife* 8
8. *The Effect of a Song* 11
9. *All Women are Alike* 12
10. *Virtue Rewarded* 13
11. *The Eyes of a Gazelle* 15
12. *Rivalry* 16
13. *Nocturnal Confusion* 17
14. *A Quick Child* 18
15. *The Treachery of Women* 19
16. *A Virgin Widow* 22
17. *The Goods of the Devil* 23
18. *Hunting for a Man* 24
19. *Hate of Crows* 25
20. *Zubair, the Evil Man* 27
21. *Three Women* 30

-
-
22. *A Reunion of Lovers* 31
23. *An Oath which was Kept* 32
24. *Faithlessness* 34
25. *Doghab's Imbecility* 35
26. *The Pretended Servant* 36
27. *Origin of the Demons* 38
28. *A Lover's Scent* 39
29. *The Two Marriages of Ismā'il* 40
30. *The Lover and the Artichokes* 43
31. *Violation of Hospitality* 44
32. *A Scholar's Slave* 45
33. *A Woman brought to Reason* 47
34. *A Strange Precaution* 51
35. *The Treason and Punishment of al-Daizān's
 Daughter* 52
36. *The Marriage of Seth* 54
37. *The Dangers of Wine* 55
38. *Greetings from the Dead* 56
39. *Black and White* 57
40. *A Husband Justified* 58
41. *Temptation Avoided* 59
42. *The Road to Advancement* 61
43. *Charity to a Dog* 63
44. *A Prince's Education* 64

-
-
45. *Jesus and the World* 67
46. *The Belly has no Eyes* 68
47. *The Prophetess* 69
48. *Two Lovers meet again in Death* 70
49. *A Bad Exchange* 74
50. *Scandal Avoided* 75
51. *Not Really Absence of Mind* 76
52. *A Call from Beyond the Tomb* 77
53. *Accepted Counsel* 79
54. *Requests of the Devil* 80
55. *He Loved a Fancy* 81
56. *The Woman Whose Lamp went Out* 84
57. *The Death of Two Lovers* 85
58. *Check to the Pursuits of the Jinn* 87
59. *A Shameless Answer* 88
60. *A Gallant Foiled* 89
61. *Adultery Detected* 90
62. *The Birth of al-Iskandar and al-Khidr* 92
63. *Children Held Responsible* 94
64. *A Woman's Two Husbands* 95
65. *Excessive Discretion of a Lover* 96
66. *A Long Shopping* 99
67. *Ibn al-Dalū and the Two Mice* 100
68. *A Recompense* 102

69.	<i>Death through Love</i>	103
70.	<i>The Afflicted Palm Tree</i>	105
71.	<i>The Sheikh-al-Islām</i>	106
72.	<i>Punishment of a She-Monkey</i>	107
73.	<i>The Forbidding of Wine</i>	108
74.	<i>Amorous Schoolchildren</i>	111
75.	<i>Authorised Murder</i>	113
76.	<i>Virtue Protected by Heaven</i>	114
77.	<i>An Old Woman's Thrust</i>	115
78.	<i>The Confident Husband</i>	116
79.	<i>A Suitable Couple</i>	119
80.	<i>The Two Masters</i>	121
81.	<i>The Hermit's Temptation</i>	122
82.	<i>Two Victims of Love</i>	124
83.	<i>Repugnance to Marriage</i>	127
84.	<i>Lukmān's Wife</i>	128
85.	<i>Causes of Scandal</i>	131
86.	<i>Feigned Quotation</i>	132
87.	<i>An Intelligent Woman</i>	134
88.	<i>The Magic Tree</i>	135
89.	<i>A Woman's Character Influences that of her Husband</i>	136
90.	<i>A Strange Reason for Love</i>	138
	<i>Notes</i>	141

*Ninety Short Tales
of Love and Women
from the Arabic*

An Oath Evaded

IT IS SAID THAT THERE WAS ONCE A VIRTUOUS Israelite and he had married a beautiful woman whom he kept under lock and key. One day she saw a youth and loved him, and he desired her. He had a key made for the door and went in to her as often as he wished. This state of things lasted for some time without the husband suspecting ; but one day he said to his wife : ‘ Your feeling has changed towards me, and I do not know why. I wish you to swear that you have known no other beside myself.’ Now the Israelites had a mountain by which they used to swear, and before which bring their law-suits ; it stood outside the city and near to a river of running water. None might perjure himself before it without dying. ‘ Certainly, I will swear, and whenever you wish,’ answered the woman ; but as soon as the saint had left her, the young man entered. She told him all that had passed between her husband and herself, and added : ‘ It is not possible for me to swear a false oath. Think out a plan for me.’ The lover reflected and remained silent : the woman went on : ‘ Be of good comfort, only do all that I tell you. To-morrow morning dress yourself as a donkey-boy, take an ass with you, and seat

Short Tales of Love and Women

yourself at the city gate. When I pass with my husband, I will ask you if your ass is for hire : you must answer that it is, and come forward and set me upon it.' 'I will do so,' replied the young man. Next morning the saint said to his wife : 'Come to the mountain.' 'I cannot walk.' 'Nevertheless, come forth with me, and if we see an ass we will hire him.' As soon as they reached the gate, she called to the young man : 'Ho ! will you hire out your ass to go to the mountain for half a dirham ?' 'Yes,' he answered, as he stepped forward and helped her to mount the ass. When they came to the mountain, she said : 'Take me down, young man.' But when he approached, she fell to the earth and, in her falling, uncovered her most secret beauties. She cursed the donkey-boy, stretched forth her hand toward the mountain, and swore this oath : 'No man has ever touched me or seen me, except my husband and this donkey-boy.' The mountain was shaken violently and disappeared from that place.

*Ahmad al-Shirwānī,
Hadīkat al-Afrāb.*

The Wazīr Saddled and Bridled

IT IS RELATED THAT A CERTAIN KING WAS passionately fond of women, and that he had a wazīr who ever persuaded him against them. One of his singing girls saw that his feelings toward her had changed, and said to him: 'Master, what is this?' 'My wazīr Such-and-Such has forbidden me to love you,' he answered. 'Give me to him,' said she, 'and see what I make of him.' So he gave her to him. When the wazīr was alone with her, she so well defended herself from his advances that a love for her encompassed his heart. But she said: 'You shall not touch me until I have mounted you and you have carried me a little.' The wazīr consented. Then the girl put a saddle upon him, and bridled him, and mounted upon him, having previously sent to tell the King. The latter hurried to her apartment while she was taking her ride. 'O wazīr, what is this I see?' he cried. 'You forbid me the love of women and then behave like this with them!' 'Prince,' answered the wazīr, 'it was to show you what I feared for you.' The King marvelled at this answer.

*Abmad al-Shirwānī,
Nafhat al-Yaman.*

Marriage Advice

ONE DAY A MAN CAME TO CONSULT DAVID concerning marriage. 'Ask Solomon,' said he, 'and bring me his answer.' The man found a boy of seven years old, playing with his companions and riding cock-horse upon a reed. When he questioned him, the child said: 'I recommend you either red gold or white silver. But see that the mare devils you not.' The man did not understand this, but David said: 'The red gold is a virgin. White silver is a woman who has only been married for a short time. Beyond these there are none but plunging mares.'

*Abmad al-Ibsaihi,
Kitāb al-Muṣṭatraḥ.*

*The Excuse which was Worse
than the Fault*

ONE DAY THE KHALĪFAH BADE ABŪ NUWĀS furnish him with an excuse which should be worse than the fault it followed. The poet waited for a suitable occasion, and one day, when the Prince was standing in the palace, stole up to him and lifted his clothes behind. The Khalīfah turned in a fury and saw Abū Nuwās. He had forgotten his command by that time. 'What is the meaning of this?' he cried. 'Excuse me, my lord, I took you for the Queen.' 'O wretch, and if it had been the Queen, would you have behaved so? That is a fine excuse indeed!' 'In fact,' answered Abu Nuwās, 'it was what you demanded.' The Khalīfah understood, and burst out laughing. He gave Abū Nuwās a present, and the poet departed in joy.

Nuzhat al-Jallās fi Akhbār Abū Nuwās.

*The Guardian of his Master's
Honour*

AL HĀRITH IBN ʿĀMIR IBN SAʿSAʿAH HAD two friends from whom he was never separated, whom he loved dearly. One day he went toward a certain of his pleasure houses, taking his friends with him. But one of them lagged behind and, finally, returned into the presence of al-Hārith's wife. The two ate and drank and went to bed together. But the husband's dog jumped upon them and killed them. When al-Hārith returned and found them dead, he understood what had happened and improvised these lines :

*It ceased not, though a beast, to guard my honour;
He ceased not, though my friend, to leap upon her.
Thus to defile my friendship, what a friend!
And what a beast, thus wisely to defend!*

*Ibn al-Jauzī,
Kitāb al-Azkiyah.*

Danger Remembered

IT IS RELATED THAT A YOUNG MAN WAS ONCE present at a meeting of certain learned teachers of old time, and when he heard one of them say : *Ya sattār*, which is an epithet of God, meaning : ‘ O Thou Who Veilest,’ he trembled like a leaf. One of them asked the reason for this, and he replied : ‘ You must know that I used to go forth disguised as a girl and betake myself to all those places where there was a feast or a marriage or an intimate meeting of women. One day I was present at the marriage of a King’s daughter, and a necklace belonging to the bride was stolen. There was a cry : “ Close the doors and search the women ! ” Thereupon all were searched, one by one, until only a single woman and myself were left. Then I prayed to God with sincere repentance and intention, saying : “ If I escape from this with honour, I will never more fall to such practices.” The necklace was found on the other woman, and I was unhanded. I was allowed to depart, and my masquerade remained a secret. But since then, when I hear *sattār*, I remember that He Veiled me, and am taken by such a trembling as you have just now seen.’

*‘ Abd Allāh al-Yāfi‘ī,
Raud al-Rayābīn.*

*The Repentance of
Potiphar's Wife*

IN THE YEARS OF THE FAMINE AND DEARTH IN the land of Egypt, Potiphar died and Joseph came into his power. Zulaika, Potiphar's wife, fell to destitution, became blind, and stretched out her hand to the people for charity. Some said to her: 'If you address yourself to the King, perhaps he will have pity on you. He may come to your aid and enrich you, since you had care of him and honoured him for a long time.' But others said: 'Do nothing of the sort, for perhaps he will remember his sufferings and his imprisonment because of your attempts to seduce him. In that case he will punish you.' 'I know his gentleness and generosity,' she answered. She sat upon a little hill above the road on the day of his going forth. He rode on a horse in the midst of a procession of a hundred thousand great ones of his people. When she felt his presence, she rose and cried: 'Glory be to him who has made slaves out of kings because of their disobedience, and, because of his obedience, a king out of a slave!' 'Who are you?' asked Joseph, and she replied: 'I am she who served you and combed your hair with her own hand, who jealously honoured

From the Arabic

your stay among us. Now what has come to me has come. I have tasted the proper chastisement of my conduct. My strength has disappeared. My fortune is lost. My eyes are darkened, and I have become a beggar. Some have pitied me, some have not pitied me. Once I was the envy of all the people of Egypt, and now I have become an object for their compassion, nay, for their abhorrence. Such is the punishment of wickedness.' Joseph wept abundantly, and then said : ' Does any of the love you bore me stay in your heart ? ' ' It does,' she answered. ' I swear by him who took Abraham to be his friend that one sight of you would be dearer to me than possession of all the earth, and that though it were filled with gold and silver.' Joseph rode forward, and sent a messenger to say to her : ' If you are free, we will marry you ; if you already have a husband, we will make you rich.' She answered through the same messenger : ' I understand that Joseph mocks me. He did not wish me in the days of my grace and beauty, how could he take me now that I am old and blind and poor ? ' But Joseph gave his orders. Zulaika made her preparations. He married her, and they led her into the bridal chamber. Then Joseph set his feet, and held himself upright, and began to pray to God, invoking his Name. The Lord

Short Tales of Love and Women
gave back her beauty and grace, her youth and the sight of her eyes to Zulaika, all as they had been on the day when she wished to seduce her husband's slave. Joseph fulfilled the marriage, and found her a virgin. She gave him two sons, Ephraim and Menasseh, who lived together happily in Islām until their death.

*Abmad al-Ibsbaihī,
Kitāb al-Muṣṭatraḥ.*

The Effect of a Song

IT IS RELATED THAT A YOUNG MAN FELL IN love with a woman at Medina. One day he made her promises, and they came together. But a singing-girl who was there sang this :

*She has not dishonoured her brother by her disgrace yet ;
She has not brought a shame to her father's face yet.*

Then the woman had no other wish but to leave the youth and return to her own house. Afterwards she sent him a thousand dīnārs, with this message : ' If you desire me, use this for my dowry, and ask me from my father in marriage.'

*al-Rāghib al-Isbahāni,
Muhādarāt al-Udabā.*

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All Women are Alike

CERTAIN CUNNING FOLK CAME TOGETHER in the dwelling of a King and at once plunged into an ocean of wishes. One said : ' If only his treasure were mine ! ' and another : ' Ah, if only all he had were mine ! ' ' If only his wife were mine ! ' exclaimed a third. The King heard their wishes, as they had intended ; so, being a man of wit, he caused ten earthen pots of *sikbāj*, which is a mixture of honey and vinegar, to be prepared and set before the third. Then he said : ' O So-and-So, taste this one. Take a little of that one. Eat a small portion of yonder one,' until the man had tried all ten. Then the King asked : ' How did you find their taste ? ' ' May God prolong the life of the King. They all tasted the same.' Then said the King : ' All women have but the one quality and one taste.' And he covered that man with confusion.

*al-Khuwārizmī,
Muṣīd al-'ulūm.*

Virtue Rewarded

IT IS RELATED THAT ONE OF THE ISRAELITISH ascetics served God in his hermitage. He had the handsomest face of all men. He used to weave baskets and sell them in the market at Jerusalem. His name was John. He wore a haircloth for sole garment ; his colouring was that of rubies seen through crystal, so great was his piety ; and a light shone from his eyes. One day he passed before the door of the most strictly guarded woman in all the city. One of her servants saw him, and said to her mistress : ‘ The handsomest young man in the world has passed before our door. He is like a carved gem.’ ‘ Bring him in,’ answered the woman, ‘ that we may see him and buy from him.’ As John walked through each chamber, the door was shut behind him, until at last he came to a hall where a very beautiful young woman sat upon a seat which was crusted with jewels. She was dressed in a tunic as transparent as water. She stayed still in stupefaction as she looked at him ; she could not prevent herself. ‘ Servant of God,’ he said, ‘ will you buy something from me ? If not, I must depart.’ ‘ I only brought you in,’ she answered, ‘ to make you the master of my body.’ Then the young

Short Tales of Love and Women

man cried: 'Woe, woe upon you! I have read the Gospel, the Book of God, and he who has read the Book of God shall in no wise disobey it.' 'Come with me into this little room,' she said. He found it filled with precious stones and gold. She said: 'All this is yours if you consent.' 'Bring me water for my ablution,' he replied. When he had finished, she handed him a napkin redolent of musk and amber, in the hope that he might become impregnated with these. But, when he saw that the matter was serious, he said: 'If you do not let me go, I will throw myself from the terrace.' Now the terrace was eighty cubits high. 'Do it with me,' she answered, 'or else throw yourself down.' He leaped over, but God in the Highest ordered the air to save him. The air held him, and he stood up in it by the power of God. Then the Lord said to Gabriel: 'Take my servant John, who was ready to perish because he feared me.' Gabriel took hold of him and set him safely upon the surface of the earth.

*Abmad al-Shirwānī,
Nafhat al-Yaman.*

The Eyes of a Gazelle

IT IS RELATED THAT MAJNŪN RECEIVED THAT name, which means the Fool, because once, when he passed by some hunters who were following a gazelle, and saw the eyes of the creature, a memory of Lailah came to him suddenly, and he fell in a swoon. When he came to himself, they asked him what had happened, and he answered : ‘ I compared the eyes of that gazelle with the eyes of Lailah.’

*al-Suyūtī,
Anīs al-Jalīs.*

Rivalry

A MAN, WHO HAD ALREADY ONE WIFE, TOOK to himself a second and much younger. The servant of the latter walked in front of the older woman's door, reciting :

*These legs are not alike. One healthy is,
The other eaten by paralysis.*

Then she walked back, reciting :

*Of these two dresses, one is old and torn,
And one is from the shop and never worn.*

But later the servant of the older woman passed in front of the new wife's door, saying :

*A man has many dwellings, is accursed
With need of change, but only loves the first.*

*Ibn 'Abd Rabīh,
Kitāb al-'iḳd al-farīd.*

Nocturnal Confusion

A WOMAN SOUGHT OUT IBN ZUBAIR AND complained to him of the relations which her husband maintained with her female servant. The man was called into the presence and questioned concerning this accusation. ‘My wife is black,’ he answered, ‘the servant is black, and I am short-sighted. When it is dark, I have to take what comes to hand.’

*Ibn ‘Abd Rabīh,
Kitāb al-‘ikd al-farīd.*

A Quick Child

GOHA MARRIED A BEAUTIFUL WIFE WHO, AT the end of three months, gave birth to a son. The women came together to give the child a name, and each made her proposal ; but at length Goha, who was standing by, suggested : ‘ The best thing would be to call him Speedy.’ ‘ Why ? ’ they asked, and he replied : ‘ Because he can make a nine months’ journey in three.’

Nawādir al-Khoja Nasr al-Dīn.

The Treachery of Woman

IT IS RELATED THAT A CERTAIN ISRAELITE HAD a wife who was among the most beautiful women of her time, and that he loved her dearly. She died, and he did not leave her tomb for a long while. Indeed he was still in that place when our Lord Jesus passed by and, seeing him weep, asked him why he did so. When the other had told his story, Jesus asked : ‘ Do you wish me to raise her from the dead ? ’ and the other answered : ‘ Yes.’ So Jesus called to the inhabitant of the tomb nearest him, and there came forth a black slave, spreading fire from his nostrils, his eyes and the openings of his body. ‘ There is no God but God,’ he said, ‘ and Jesus is the Breath of God.’ ‘ Prophet of the Lord,’ said the man, ‘ that is not she.’ And he pointed to another tomb. Then Jesus said to the negro : ‘ Return to your place.’ And he fell dead and entered again into the earth. Then the prophet turned toward the other grave, crying : ‘ Let the dweller in this grave rise up through the will of God ! ’ The tomb gaped and a woman came forth, shaking the dust from her head. ‘ O Breath of God,’ cried the man, ‘ that is indeed my wife.’ ‘ Take her,’ said Jesus. So the other took her and immediately departed. Later he

Short Tales of Love and Women

was weighed down by sleep, and said : ‘ I am worn out with having watched by your tomb. I wish to rest.’ ‘ Very well,’ she said. He laid his head on his wife’s thigh and slept. Soon a Prince, who was one of the most handsome men of his time, passed by upon a fine horse, and when the woman saw him her heart went out to him. She set down her husband’s head upon the earth and rose. And when the Prince saw her he fell in love with her. ‘ Take me,’ she said. He took her behind him on his horse and departed. When he woke and did not find his wife, the husband followed the tracks of the horse and came up with her. ‘ O Prince, that is my wife,’ he said, ‘ therefore let her down.’ But she denied him, saying : ‘ I belong to the King’s son.’ And the Prince asked : ‘ Do you envy me my wife ? ’ ‘ As God lives, she is my wife,’ exclaimed the husband. ‘ Our Lord Jesus raised her from the dead for me.’ As these things were going forward, Jesus appeared before them. ‘ O Breath of God,’ cried the man, ‘ is not this the woman whom you raised from the dead for me ? ’ ‘ It is,’ said Jesus. But the woman cried : ‘ O Breath of God, he is a liar ! I am the wife of this Prince.’ ‘ Did I not raise you from the dead through God’s will ? ’ asked Jesus. ‘ No indeed, O Breath of God.’ ‘ Nevertheless you must render me back

From the Arabic

that which I have given.' The woman fell forward, and Jesus said : ' If any would look upon one who died an unbeliever, and was raised from the dead, and believed again, and died in the Faith, let him look upon that black man. If any would look upon one who died a Believer, and was raised from the dead, and became unfaithful and died without the Faith, let him look upon this woman.' Afterwards the man swore that he would never marry. He retired into the desert, and adored God there until his death.

*Abmad al-Kalyūbī,
Nawādir.*

A Virgin Widow

IN A CERTAIN QUARTER OF BAGHDĀD A pleasant woman married an agreeable man. But the latter died at the end of three years without leaving children. Therefore the parents married the widow to the dead man's brother, according to custom, so that he might get heirs upon her for the property. The first night of the marriage passed ill. Next morning the new bridegroom made complaint of it to the woman's people. For three further nights she refused her accommodation to the prayers of her husband, and at last he said to her relations : ' She must be suffering from a spell of witchcraft, or a cold on the kidneys. She has been married for three years, and ought to know well enough what the first night of marriage means, and the implication of the following nights.' Therefore her parents called the widow to them and angrily reproached her, but she burst into tears, and cried : ' O my mother, this evil man wishes to use me in front ! ' Thus it was that the second husband had the virginity of a widow who had been married for three years.

Abmad ibn Bakr.

The Goods of the Devil

WE READ IN THE KITĀB IBTILĀʾIL AKHYĀR that Jesus once met Iblīs driving five asses before him, and asked him about them. ‘They carry the goods for which I am seeking purchasers,’ answered the devil. ‘And what goods are they?’ ‘The first is tyranny.’ ‘Who will buy that?’ ‘Kings; and the second is pride.’ ‘Who will buy that?’ ‘The nobility; and the third is envy.’ ‘Who will buy that?’ ‘Scholars; and the fourth is knavery.’ ‘Who will buy that?’ ‘Business men; and the fifth is guile.’ ‘Who will buy that?’ ‘Women,’ answered Iblīs.

al-Damīrī,
Hayāt al-Hayawān.

Short Tales of Love and Women
and said : ' I will send you back.' ' I wish you would,' she answered, ' and I also wish that I were blind. I did not marry you through any liking. I had sworn never to wed any man except al-Kais, but my father was the stronger.'

*Ja'far al-Kāri,
Masāri' al-'ushshak.*

Zubair, the Evil Man

ZUBAIR WAS A PERVERSE AND MEDDLESOME fellow, who did not even take the trouble to hide his vices. He had a very beautiful wife, who was loved by one of her compatriots ; and she repaid that love. It must be remembered that Zubair was full of guile. Next door to him there dwelt a Sage, at whose house the people would collect at evening to hear his discourse and commentary upon history and ethics. Zubair used to be one of this audience, though he only went in order to vaunt himself as a friend of learning. Now the Sage also had a very beautiful wife, and the lover of the wife of Zubair pretended, for his own ends, to be smitten with the Sage's wife, who was, in fact, extremely virtuous and dearly loved her husband. This is how the lover worked his plan : after seeking out Zubair and swearing him to secrecy, he told him that he was in love with the Sage's wife and that his love was returned. Then he asked Zubair to help him in his intrigue. But Zubair thought it his duty to assure him that the woman would never submit. ' Ah,' cried the lover, ' it is impossible for me to renounce the joy of seeing her. She ravishes my soul, and is inclined to me. Also my fortune is

Short Tales of Love and Women
considerable, and expense is no object. I will give you two ounces of silver every day on condition that you go each evening to listen to your neighbour's lecture and, as soon as he has finished, you turn and speak to him in a loud voice. When I hear you, I will know that the husband has finished.' Zubair agreed, and, while he carried out his duty at the Sage's house, the other joined the woman of his choice, and delighted with her until the end of the lecture. As soon as Zubair began to shout at the Sage, the lover left his mistress, and Zubair did not for a moment suspect that the trouble was in his own home. But after a few evenings the Sage began to think it strange that Zubair should always speak to him so loudly when he was on the point of rising ; so, on one occasion, he brought his discourse to a close much sooner than usual and, leaping upon Zubair, seized him, crying : ' As Allāh lives, if you say a single word, I will break your bones ! ' Then he dragged Zubair into the room of his wife, whom he found quietly and honestly occupied over some domestic task. The Sage reflected for a moment, and then as violently dragged Zubair along the balcony to the neighbouring apartment. His wife followed, and all three, as they entered, saw the wife of Zubair in a fine position with her lover. Then said the Sage :

From the Arabic

‘ O wicked and unhappy Zubair, the dishonour is in your own house, and yourself opened the door for it ! ’ Zubair in shame and anger repudiated his wife, and left the country. He who encourages deceit shall be its victim.

Ahmad ibn Bakr.

Three Women

SĀLIH IBN AHMAD AL-IJLĪ TELLS US THAT he learned the following from his father. Three women came into the presence of Iyās ibn Mu‘āwiyah, and he said : ‘ That one is a nursing mother, this one is a virgin, and yonder is separated from her husband.’ When he was asked how he knew these things, he answered : ‘ The first held her breasts with her hand as she sat down ; when the second came in, she looked at no one ; but the third sent bold glances to right and left.’

*Ibn al-Jauzī,
Kitāb al-Aẓkīyah.*

A Reunion of Lovers

I ONCE HAD A YOUNG SLAVE, SAYS THE saintly Muhammad ibn ‘Ubaid Allāh, and I sold her. Then my passion urged me to follow her ; I sought out her master with certain of my brothers, and these asked him to cancel the sale, taking whatever profit he would. He refused. I left his house under a load of sadness, and passed the next night without sleeping, not knowing what to do. When I realised the full of my pain I wrote the name of the young girl on the palm of each of my hands ; then I turned towards the *kiblah*, and every time that her memory wounded me I lifted my hands to heaven, saying : ‘ Lord, such is my story.’ At dawn on the second day, a man knocked at my door. ‘ Who is there ? ’ I cried, and the answer came : ‘ I am the purchaser of that girl.’ I opened, and the child was there. ‘ Take her, and God bless you ! ’ said the man. ‘ Then receive back your money and a profit,’ I replied. ‘ I will receive neither *dīnār* nor *dirham* from you,’ said he. ‘ And why ? ’ Then he answered : ‘ Last night one came to me in a dream, saying : “ Take back the girl to Ibn ‘Ubaid Allāh, and you shall have Paradise.” ’

*Ibn Kā'im al-Jauziyah,
Aḥbbār al-Nisā.*

*An Oath which was
Kept*

ONE OF THE KHALĪFAHS ONCE SWORE AN Oath that he would not recite any verses, and that for each line he happened to let fall he would free a slave. One day, while he was circling the Kaabah, he saw a young man chatting there with a very pretty girl. 'O man,' he cried, 'is it in such a place . . .?' 'As Allāh lives, O Commander of the Faithful,' answered the youth, 'there is nothing shameful in our act. This young woman is my cousin and the dearest thing in all the world to me; but her father has refused her to me in marriage because of my destitution. He demands a hundred camels and a hundred ounces of gold from me, and I cannot give them.' Then the Khalīfah called the father to him and paid over all that he had asked from his nephew; also he stayed with those people until the marriage was concluded. Then he returned to his own place, humming a verse. 'O master,' said one of his favourite slaves, 'I think that you have been reciting verses to-day. Have you forgotten your oath, or must we believe that you have fallen in love?' Then the Khalīfah recited these :

From the Arabic

*'You're moved to-day,' remarked my pretty maid.
'And yet 'tis long since your desire was laid.
Has one excited you?' And then I said:
'A lover and his lass to me have prayed,
And once a lover, always, I'm afraid.'*

Afterwards he counted the lines and found that they were five. So he freed the required number of slaves, saying: 'How excellent is my poetry! It has given liberty to five souls.'

*Ahmad al-Ibsaihi,
Kitāb al-Mustātraf.*

Faithlessness

THERE WAS A VERY BEAUTIFUL ISRAELITISH woman who dwelt in the house of her husband, a scavenger. When he came in at evening, she prepared food and made his bed. The King of that time saw her and sent an old woman to her, who said : ‘ What have you to do with scavengers ? If you were with the King, he would dress you in silks and furnish you apartments of brocade.’ On the evening of the day when she had heard these words, her husband returned and found neither food nor bed prepared. ‘ What is the meaning of this negligence, O Hintah ? ’ he asked. ‘ It is as you see,’ she answered. ‘ Then I put you away.’ ‘ So be it.’ He repudiated her, and the King wedded her ; but, when she was brought into his presence, he looked at her and became blind. Then he groped towards her with his hand, and his hand withered. The prophet of that time submitted the case to God, and received this revelation : ‘ If they do not think I am concerned with what is done to a scavenger, they err. I shall not pardon them.’

*Ja'far al-Kāri,
Masāri' al-'ushshak.*

Dogbah's Imbecility

THIS CONCERNS DOGHAH, THE DAUGHTER OF Min'āj. It is told of her great foolishness that when she was pregnant and the moment of her deliverance came, she felt movements in her belly. She sought out a wall and, when she had placed herself in position, brought forth. When she had borne a child, it cried. She rose up in a fright, and ran to her mother, crying: 'Can a motion open its mouth?' 'Yes,' answered the older woman, who understood what had happened, 'it surely can when it wants its father.' She asked where the place might be and, when her daughter told her, went to it and found the baby.

*al-Mufaddal,
Kitāb al-Fāḵbir.*

The Pretended Servant

IT IS RELATED THAT A CERTAIN SHEIKH ASKED for a woman in marriage, but her relations refused to give her to him unless he provided a female slave. Now he had not the means to purchase one. He spoke of the matter to one of his friends, and the man said : ‘ I will take the servant’s place. Go to those people and tell them that you have obtained such a woman as they required, but that she will only work in a place where she may be alone, without either seeing or being seen.’ The man carried this message, and the woman’s people said : ‘ As long as she does all the work required of her we have no need to see her.’ And they gave him the wife he wished. The sheikh fetched his friend and left him alone in a certain part of the house. This friend was dark-coloured and beardless. He covered his face with a veil, and began to grind corn. The bride supposed him to be a female servant. The sheikh left his wife during the night to go and adore God. The woman told her folk of this, and they said : ‘ Perhaps he has gone to find the slave.’ So, when he went out on the next night, his wife followed, to see if he was with the servant. She found the servant praying, while the mill was

From the Arabic

turning by itself. Of the sheikh she saw nothing. She returned in her surprise, and kept silence until her husband came back to her. Then she said : ‘ I saw the servant praying and the mill turning by itself.’ ‘ That is not a servant but my friend,’ he answered. Then the woman cried : ‘ God pardon me ! I am the servant and will serve you both ! ’

*‘ Abd Allāb al-Yāfi‘ī,
Raud al-Rayāhīn.*

Origin of the Demons

IT IS RELATED THAT GOD CREATED ALL demons out of the simoom, and that He created a wife for the simoom out of the simoom, as he had created Eve from Adam. The simoom had connection with his wife ; she became pregnant by him and laid thirty eggs. One of these eggs, in breaking, gave birth to the *ḡutrūbah*, who was, so to say, the mother of all the *ḡatārib*, those demons which take the bodies of cats. From another egg came forth the *iblis*, among whom we must number al-Hārith Abū Murrah ; these dwell in walls. Another egg produced the *maradah*, who inhabit the isles. Another produced the *aghwāl*, who have a special fondness for ruins and deserts ; another, the *sa'āli*, who go up into high mountains ; another, the *wahāwīs*, who live in the air as winged serpents and fly over the spaces of it. The *dawāsik* came out of another egg ; the *hamāsik* out of another ; the *hamāmīs* from yet another, and so forth and so onward.

Mas'ūdī,
The Golden Meadows.

A Lover's Scent

WHEN LAILAH DIED, MAJNŪN CAME TO HER tribe and wished to see her tomb; but they refused to lead him to it. Then he began to snuff the earth about each grave until he found that which was about the grave of Lailah. He recognised it for what it was, and improvised this verse :

*They would wickedly hide her tomb from her lover, her
Perfumes spreading into the sand discover her.*

He did not cease from repeating these words, until he died and was buried beside her.

*Babā al-Dīn al-'Amilī,
al-Kashkūl.*

*The Two Marriages of
Ismā'il*

ISMĀ'IL MARRIED AL-DJADĀ, THE DAUGHTER of Sa'd the Amalekite. So Abraham, after asking and obtaining permission from Sarah to visit Ismā'il, journeyed to Mecca. Now Ismā'il was hunting and feeding his flocks with Hagar, his mother. Abraham greeted al-Djadā, wife of Ismā'il and daughter of Sa'd, but she did not return his greeting. Then he said: 'Is this a place where strangers are received?' 'As God lives, it is not,' she answered. 'What is the master of the house about?' 'He is away.' 'Tell him, when he returns, that Abraham asked news of him and his mother, and that now he counsels him to change the threshold of his house and take another.' Then Abraham took the backward road to Syria. That evening Ismā'il and Hagar returned and saw that the valley was shining as with the light of dawn, and that the flocks of sheep smelled at certain tracks. Then he asked his wife, the Amalekite: 'Did anything happen after my departure?' 'Yes,' she answered, 'an old man came here.' And she told him all that had passed. 'It was my father, the Friend of God,' he said. 'He has counselled me to send you away. Go back

From the Arabic

to your own people, for there is no good in you at all.' For his second wife, Ismā'il took Sāmāh, the daughter of Muhalhil. Abraham asked Sarah's permission to pay another visit to Ismā'il, but she was tormented by jealousy and made him swear that, when he arrived at the end of his journey, he would not set foot to earth. Men are not in agreement on the question of what beast he rode. Some say that it was Barak, the first of the horses ; others think that it was a she-ass, or perhaps some other animal. When Abraham arrived in the valley, he saluted the Jurhamite, the wife of Ismā'il. She returned his salutation, wished him welcome, and received him very graciously. He asked news of Ismā'il and Hagar, and she gave it, telling him that both were away feeding their flocks. Then she invited him to dismount, but he refused to do so. The Jurhamite begged with insistence that Abraham would enter, but he would not consent ; so she gave him milk and slices of game, and he blessed them. Then she brought out a stone which was in the tent. He leaned sideways from his mount and set his right foot on the stone. The Jurhamite combed and scented his hair on that side, then, carrying the stone round to the left, combed and scented his hair on that side also. After a certain time he departed, saying : ' When Ismā'il returns tell him that

Short Tales of Love and Women

Abraham greets him and counsels him to preserve the threshold of his house, for he will never find a better.'

*Mas'ūdī,
The Golden Meadows.*

The Lover and the Artichokes

GOHA'S WIFE TELLS THIS STORY: MY husband came one day to the house when my lover was with me ; so I hid the youth in our cellar. Goha had brought thirty artichokes with him, and these he put into the same cellar. My lover ate one of them. Then my husband began to count the artichokes one by one ; my lover gave them to him and he thought it was his own hand lighting upon them in the cellar. When he found that one was missing, he searched the cellar and found my lover. 'Who are you ?' he asked. 'I am an artichoke,' answered the youth. Then Goha cried : 'What a cheat that man was ! He counted this fellow in as an artichoke. No wonder I asked him why the basket was so heavy.' He led my lover to the vegetable-merchant, saying : 'Have you no fear of God ! How did you dare to weigh this in with my artichokes ?' The man was of a facetious turn of mind ; he took my lover by the ear, and cried : 'How often have I told you only to let yourself be counted as a turnip, never as an artichoke ?' Then he gave my husband another artichoke.

Nawādir al-Khoja Nasr al-Dīn.

Violation of Hospitality

IT IS RELATED THAT AN ARAB ONCE FOUND a man in the desert at the last stages of hunger and thirst, of weariness and fear. He had wandered far from his caravan, and for many days had known neither food nor water. The Arab gave him to eat and drink, and promised to lead him back to his caravan when he should have rested for three days and recovered from his fatigue and deprivation. They came to the Arab's tent, and the stranger, as soon as he was fed and rested and freed from fear, finding himself alone with his host's wife, sought to seduce her. She repulsed him and, when her husband returned, told him what had happened. He did not reproach the stranger, but set him on a camel and led him to his own caravan. As they were parting, the other said : ' I wish you would do me the honour of asking something from me.' ' I ask nothing,' answered the Arab, ' except that, when you are once more with your own people, you will tell them how we behaved towards you and how you behaved to us.'

*Bresnier,
Anthologie arabe.*

A Scholar's Slave

THERE WAS ONCE A SCHOLAR WHO LIVED IN Damascus, reading in numerous books ; and he was waited upon only by a single female slave, who had come from the country. One day, when this slave brought her master his food, he jested with her in a scholarly way, and she, who was by nature timid, blushed and let fly an impropriety. The scholar cried angrily : ‘ Do you dare to allow yourself such things in my presence ? I am going to chastise you.’ He took off one of his long black slippers and, making the girl bend down before him, cleared away her clothes from behind in order to whip her. But when he saw her firm white buttocks, and the youth and freshness of her thighs, he dropped his slipper and, fetching another matter from beneath his robe, gave it to the girl without changing her position. The slave, who had hitherto known nothing of this kind of punishment, suffered it to the end, and then left the apartment. Next morning, while the scholar was deep in his meditation among the books of the ancient Sages, there came a knock at the door and the slave appeared. ‘ What is it now ? ’ cried the scholar. ‘ Have I not forbidden you to interrupt my studies ? ’ ‘ Alas,

Short Tales of Love and Women
my lord, it is I,' replied the slave. 'And what do you want?' asked the scholar. 'I have let an impropriety,' she answered, 'and come to be chastised.'

Abmad ibn Bakr.

A Woman brought to Reason

I HAD A WIFE, SAID A CERTAIN SHEIKH, OF whom I was exceedingly fond. One night an ecstasy came upon me in my sleep ; my wife heard what I said and saw my state ; it was a violent ecstasy. When I woke, she asked me what the matter was, and bade me tell her of my ecstasy. But I remained silent and at last went out and left her. ‘ Fetch my mother and my sister,’ she said to our servants and, when these two had come to her, continued : ‘ I will not be his wife any longer ; he is possessed by a devil. I will not stay in the house with him.’ Her relations blamed her for this decision and wished to turn her from it, but she remained obstinate. ‘ At least wait till we have seen him,’ they said. When I learned what had passed, I went to my wife and asked her what her intention might be. ‘ To leave you,’ she answered. ‘ If I do not I shall kill myself, and my blood will be upon your head.’ ‘ Give me seven days’ delay,’ I pleaded, and she granted my request. I felt a most lively grief at the thought of being separated from her ; I tried to win her over with many rich presents, but she refused to be won. Her people tried to influence her, but she would not listen to them.

Short Tales of Love and Women

As soon as I was quite certain that she was resolved to leave me, I felt true desolation ; my bodily condition altered, my soul was troubled, and I could find none to comfort me. When but a single night remained of the week's reprieve, I grew worse, and the earth became too narrow a thing to hold me. I returned to God, I put the business in His hands, and resolved to be satisfied with all He did. Then I made this prayer to Him : ' O God, Who knowest every secret thing, Who fulfillest all prayer, I implore Thy succour. I seek Thine aid, O Protector of all men ! ' I repeated this prayer three times, and then sat down. When midnight came, I turned in the direction of Mecca. Just as I did so, my wife came in to me quickly and embraced my feet, saying : ' I beg you, in the name of Almighty God, to accept me again. I repent of my exigency, I return to God and I ask Him to accept my contrition.' ' I will not receive you back,' I answered, ' unless you tell me what has caused all this.' And she said : ' Yesterday I was resolved to put my plan into execution. But I saw a man come to me in my dreams, holding a whip in his right hand and a knife in his left. " If you do not renounce your project," he said, " I will kill you with this knife." Then he gave me three blows with the whip. I was terrified, and the blows

From the Arabic

hurt me. I waked for an hour and then slept again, and the man came to me, still holding his knife and whip. "Have I not warned and admonished you?" he said. "Have I not given an order?" He lifted his hand to me, and I woke in terror. I have come in all haste to see you, that you may accept my repentance, that you may be satisfied with me and pray God for me.' Then she uncovered her body and I saw three marks of a whip upon her. I said: 'May God inspire us both to repentance! I accept you in this world and the next.' 'I give up my dowry to you,' she replied, 'from gratitude to God. I have twenty dīnārs' worth of jewels; take them for the poor, with my rich clothing, in gratitude to God.' I gave these things to the poor on the next day. Then I examined God's conduct and benevolence towards me in this matter, and saw that He had rewarded me for my resignation to His will. I became sure that all is in His hands. After this I lived with my wife for seven years in the most perfect joy, praising God and accepting all He did. Then my wife died. After her death, I saw her in a dream, at the full height of her beauty, dressed in such sumptuous clothes and wearing such bright jewels that I can in no wise describe them. I said to her: 'How has God treated you and what have you received from your

Short Tales of Love and Women
Creator?' 'These which you see,' she answered, 'and now I am waiting for you to come and find me. May He be as satisfied with you as you with me!'

*'Abd Allāh al-Yāfi'i,
Raud al-Rayābīn.*

A Strange Precaution

A SON FOUND HIS MOTHER WITH A MAN, and killed her. He was asked: 'Why did you not kill the man and spare your mother?' 'Oh, then,' he answered, 'I would have had to kill a man each day.'

*Abū Madyān al-Fāsī,
Majmū' al-ẓarf.*

*The Treason and Punishment of
Al-Daizan's Daughter*

AL-DAIZAN, MASTER OF A NUMEROUS ARMY, had allied himself to the Romans and was entirely devoted to them. The ravages of his soldiers in 'Irāk and the Sawād called forth the resentment of Sābūr, King of Persia, who therefore came to besiege him in the fortress of al-Hadr, whither he had retreated. For a month Sābūr attacked without success, and every ruse he could think of remained unfruitful, until one day al-Nadīrah, al-Daizan's daughter, who had climbed upon the ramparts, looked down upon the Persian King. Now he was one of the handsomest and best-built men of his time. She fell in love with him and sent word in secret that, if he would swear to marry her and give her first place among his wives, she would betray the city into his power. When she had obtained his promise, she sent him a second message, bidding him ascend the Tharthar, which was the canal flowing above al-Hadr, and to throw straws into it. Then he was to follow the drift of the straws and see at what place they entered the city, since it was by that secret opening that he should introduce his soldiers. Sābūr followed her advice. Heading the army himself, he pene-

From the Arabic

trated to the heart of the fortress, without being perceived by any of the garrison. Also al-Nadīrah, being impatient to become Sābūr's wife, helped out his plan by making her father drunk. Sābūr cut the throats of al-Daizan and of all his people. Then he razed the citadel to the ground, and finally married al-Nadīrah. One night, as she tossed on her bed without being able to sleep, Sābūr asked her the cause of her restlessness. 'Your bed is torturing my thighs,' she answered. 'Is that possible?' asked Sābūr. 'It is made of ostrich down, and no monarch in all the world has a softer or more delicate couch.' Next morning he found a myrtle leaf beneath al-Nadīrah's shoulder; therefore, since she had complained of being tortured even to bleeding point, he gave her the leaf, saying: 'Ah, wretched woman, on what did your parents feed you?' 'On cream and marrow, on snow and honey, on exquisite wine,' she answered. 'Then my duty is to kill you,' cried Sābūr, 'since you have repaid all those advantages by murdering your father and your kin.' He ordered her to be fastened between two wild stallions; then these were loosed and she was torn to pieces.

The Marriage of Seth

WHEN ADAM WAS FAR GONE IN THAT illness which was to carry him off, he powerfully desired to eat the fruits of Paradise. Therefore he sent his sons out by every road to bring him the like. Seth was beside him, and Adam said: 'Pray to God to send these fruits to me.' 'Pray to Him yourself,' answered his son. But Adam said: 'I am ashamed before God because of what happened when I ate the fruit of the Tree against His order.' Then Seth prayed to God and went up into the mountain to seek for the fruit. He saw Gabriel coming towards him with a dish of it, and a hūrī of Paradise was carrying the dish upon her head. Adam ate, and then prayed to God to marry this hūrī to his son Seth. The Highest consented, and she was the first woman who spoke Arabic.

*'Ali Dedeh al-Busnāwī,
Muhādarāt al-Awā'il.*

The Dangers of Wine

AN OLD ARAB WOMAN SAT NEAR SOME YOUNG folk who were drinking wine. They insisted on her taking a cup of it, and she was comforted ; they gave her a second ; her face reddened and she laughed. After she had finished a third cup, she said to them : ‘ Do your women drink this thing in ‘Irāk ? ’ And when they answered : ‘ Yes,’ she cried : ‘ Then I swear, by the Master of the Kaabah, that they all whore, and that not one of you knows his father.’

al-Sharīshī,
Commentaire des Séances de Harīrī.

Greetings from the Dead

HAMMĀD AL-RĀWIYAH TELLS THE FOLLOWING story: Passing by the tomb of Taubah during the night, the husband of Lailah al-Akhlayah swore that his wife should dismount, go toward the tomb, and salute it, in order to give the lie to the lines of the dead poet :

*If I were greeted by Lailah, though the tomb
And flat stones parted I would know by whom.
Either I'd joyfully answer, or a bird
Fly from my breast to tell her that I heard.*

At first she refused, but her husband compelled her; so she came down from her camel, with the tears streaming into her breast like a storm of rain. ' Greeting, O Taubah ! ' she said, and had hardly finished when the tomb opened and a bird like a white dove came out of it. It struck Lailah in the breast, and she fell dead. They made her a funeral; they wrapped her in a winding-sheet and buried her by the tomb of Taubah.

*Mas'ūdī,
The Golden Meadows.*

Black and White

AN ABYSSINIAN AND A GREEK WOMAN WERE flyting for supremacy. The second said : 'I am a grain of camphor and you are a sack of charcoal.' 'I am a grain of musk and you are a sack of salt,' the Abyssinian answered.

Abmad al-Ibsaihi,
Kitāb al-Muṣṭatraḥ.

A Husband Justified

A WOMAN SOUGHT THE PRESENCE OF ‘UBAID Allāh ibn Ziyād. She was covered with fat, big-bellied and very beautiful. She came to complain of her husband, saying that he was black-souled and of a worthless character. The Amīr turned to the man, asking: ‘Of what does this woman complain?’ ‘May God cherish the Amīr!’ answered the husband. ‘Ask her whether her body and its fat come from my nourishment or that of another.’ ‘Yours!’ cried the woman. ‘Are you going to grudge me the very food I eat? Even dogs have to live in some way.’ The man answered: ‘Oh, Amīr, ask her if her clothes were bought with my money or that of another.’ ‘Your money, of course!’ cried the woman. ‘Are you going to grudge me the very clothes I stand up in?’ The man continued: ‘Ask her, O Amīr, if that which she bears in her body is by me or by another.’ ‘By you!’ cried the woman. ‘I would rather it were by a dog!’ Then said the husband: ‘May God cherish the Amīr! What more does this woman want save to be fed and clothed and ravished?’ ‘You have right on your side,’ said the Amīr. ‘Take her away.’

*The pseudo Jābir,
Kitāb al-Mahāsīn.*

Temptation Avoided

ONE DAY AL-HAJJĀJ VISITED HIS PRISON. A certain man was brought before him, and he questioned him about his offences. 'May God protect the Amīr !' answered this prisoner. 'I will tell you my story ; for, if a lie would save me, yet truth is better than salvation. I am the brother of a man whom the Amīr sent into Khorassān. He had a wife who fell in love with me without my being aware. She sent me this message one day : 'A letter has come from your friend. Visit me, and you shall read it.' I went to her house and she kept me in conversation until the time for prayer at middle afternoon. Then she told me what she had in her heart, and invited me to commit that evil. I refused, and she said : 'If you do not do it, I will cry out and say that you are a robber.' As I still refused, she uttered screams. I fled as fast as I could. I would rather have died than betray my brother. The Amīr's guards met me and laid hold of me while I was saying these lines :

*A white, caressing woman pressed and pressed,
But, though unchaste, I'd been her husband's
guest.*

Short Tales of Love and Women

Al-Hajjāj recognised the truth of this story and ordered the man to be released.

*I'bn Kā'im al-Jauziyah,
Akḥbār al-Nisā.*

The Road to Advancement

A CERTAIN SHĀH OF PERSIA, BELONGING TO ancient days, once saw from the terrace of his palace a man of grave aspect who, upon that of a neighbouring house, was making the strangest contortions in an endeavour to connect with himself. Surprised at such a proceeding, the Shāh sent one of his guards for the man, and the latter, when he was introduced into the Presence, prostrated himself and waited to be questioned. ‘O strange man,’ said the Shāh, ‘what was the meaning of your extravagant occupation? What result did you hope from it? You have the appearance of a reasonable and even a venerable man, and yet you behave like a lunatic.’ ‘O sacred Majesty,’ the other answered, ‘behold, I am the dust of your feet! But my action was not quite so unreasonable as it may have appeared. I have observed that all those men with whom Your Majesty connects reach to high employment and become tax farmers, governors of provinces, or ministers. I wished to see whether perchance my own property had the same virtue as that of Your Majesty, and whether, by introducing it personally, I could not raise myself up to honour.’ The Shāh laughed consumedly at this

Short Tales of Love and Women

reply and, perceiving that he had to do with a man of some wit, gave him an important position about the court.

Abmad ibn Bakr.

Charity to a Dog

ACCORDING TO MUSLIM, THE PROPHET TOLD this story: 'One day a woman was walking in the desert, and thirst became painful to her. She went down into a well and drank, and then climbed up again. At the top she found a dog who was eating the damp earth in the excess of his desire for water. 'He is in the same state as I was,' she said to herself. She went down into the well, filled her shoe with water, and, holding it between her teeth, climbed forth a second time. She gave the dog to drink, and God congratulated her and pardoned her.' Then some of the people said: 'O Prophet of God, is there then a recompense for service done to animals?' 'Certainly,' he answered, 'for every delicate spirit there is a recompense.'

*al-Damīrī,
Hayāt al-Hayawān.*

A Prince's Education

DŪ RIYĀSAHAIN RELATES THAT BAHRĀM Jūr had a son whom he destined to reign after him ; but the child grew up of somewhat feeble intelligence, lacking all manly instinct, bad-mannered, and with no elevation of spirit. This saddened his father, and he entrusted the boy to tutors, astrologers and sages in the hope that he might become fond of them and learn something from them. He used to question them, but all they told him of the lad's lack of application and understanding grieved him sorely. One day a certain tutor said to him : ' It is true that we are afraid for his education, but something has happened which counsels us to patience and gives us some hope of success.' ' What is that ? ' asked the King, and the other answered : ' He has seen the daughter of the Satrap Such-and-Such and has fallen in love with her. She has taken full possession of his mind ; he has no thought or guide beyond her.' ' Then I also am hopeful of success,' said Bah-rām. He called the girl's father and said to him : ' I am about to trust you with a secret. Let it remain with you.' The father promised discretion, and then the King told him of his own son's love for his daughter, and that it was

From the Arabic

his intention that the two should marry. He bade him instruct his daughter to make herself desired of the young man, to enter into correspondence with him, but to deny him all sight of herself. When the Prince's desire had become permanent, she was to remove herself and utterly avoid him. Then, if he wished to know the reason for this, she was to inform him that nothing less than a King would suit her. 'Let me know what passes between them,' continued Bahrām, 'but do not tell your daughter the secret with which I have entrusted you.' The father accepted this charge, and the King said to the tutor who had first reported the affair: 'Excite and encourage him to correspond with this woman.' The man did so, and the girl exactly obeyed her father's instructions. When the time came for her to be distant with the prince, and he understood the reason of her aversion, he at once set himself to study, to seek wisdom, and to learn the arts of equitation, archery and polo, until he had become skilled in all of them. Then his instructors told his father that he had need of horses and weapons, stores and dresses, cup-mates and many another thing. The King rejoiced and ordered him to be given what he wanted. Then he called the tutor to him, and said: 'My son does not understand his position with regard to this woman. Therefore

Short Tales of Love and Women

go to him and advise him to tell me about it, and to ask me for my permission to marry her.' The tutor did as he was told, and the youth made his petition to his father. The King summoned the Satrap, and the latter sent for his daughter in all haste.

*Ahmad al-Ibsaihi,
Kitāb al-Muṣṭatraḥ.*

Jesus and the World

IT IS RELATED THAT THE WORLD APPEARED to Jesus (upon whom be salvation!) as an old woman having grey hair and being covered with ornaments. 'How often have you been married?' he asked her, and she replied: 'I have not counted.' He asked again: 'Have all your husbands died by your side, or have they put you away?' 'I have killed them all,' she answered. Then said Jesus: 'It is sad that the example of some has not served as a warning to others of them. You treated them one after another in the same way, and none were on their guard.'

al-Yāfi'ī,
Raud al-Rayāhīn.

The Belly has no Eyes

ABU'L-HĀRITH WAS INVITED TO HIS MISTRESS'S house one day, and she spoke with him for a long while, until he became hungry and asked for food. 'Is not my face sufficient to distract your thoughts from eating?' she asked, and he replied: 'May I be your ransom! If even historical lovers, such as Jamīl and Buthainah, had sat together for an hour without eating, they would have spat in each other's faces and separated for ever.'

*Abmad al-Ibshaibī,
Kitāb al-Muṣṭatraḥ.*

The Prophetess

THEY BROUGHT A WOMAN WHO PRETENDED prophecy into the presence of al-Mutawakkil. 'You are a prophetess?' he asked, and she answered: 'Yes.' 'Do you believe in Muhammad?' 'Yes.' 'Yet he said: *After me there shall be no more prophets.*' To which the woman replied: 'Yes. But did he say: *After me there shall be no more prophetesses?*' al-Mutawakkil began to laugh and gave her a handsome present.

*Abmad al-Ibshaihī,
Kitāb al-Mustatraf.*

Two Lovers meet again in Death

ABU'L-KĀSIM AL-MĀMŪN IBN ISMĀ'ĪL
 Aibn 'Abd Allāh told me that he heard the following story from his father. There was once a singing-girl at Medina, incomparable for beauty of face, for education and intelligence. She had read the Korān, could quote the poets, and had wonderful acquaintance with the Arabic tongue. She was indispensable to Yazīd ibn 'Abd al-Malik and had entire dominion over his heart. One day he said to her : ' Have you no relation or someone you love whom I can receive as my guest and cover with my benefits ? ' ' O Prince of Believers, I have no relations at all ; but there are three men in Medina who used to be friends of my first master. I should like them to receive some part of your goodness towards me.' So the Khalīfah wrote to the governor of Medina to send for these three men, and to give each of them ten thousand dirhams. When they came to the door of Yazīd's palace, they asked permission to enter in order to thank him. This was allowed, and the Khalīfah treated them with great respect and questioned them concerning their further needs. Two of them pointed out their necessities, and these were satisfied. But when the third was



'AWAR SAKAR JUNG BAHADUR'

From the Arabic

asked what he desired, he answered : ‘ O Commander of the Faithful, I desire nothing.’ ‘ Is there naught I could do to satisfy you ? ’ ‘ Indeed there is, O Prince of Believers, but my desire is such that I do not think you would grant it.’ ‘ Yet ask, for if it be at all possible you shall have your wish.’ ‘ But have I assurance of safety ? ’ ‘ You have.’ ‘ Then, O Commander of the Faithful, may it please you to order your young slave, for whose sake you have honoured us, to sing three songs, and I, in the meanwhile, will drink three measures of wine.’ The face of the Khalifah changed. He left the hall and, entering the girl’s apartment, reported the matter. ‘ But what have you to fear, O Prince of Believers ? ’ she asked. So he ordered the young man to be brought in, and had three gold seats prepared. He sat down on one of them himself, and caused the girl and the youth to sit upon the two others. Then he called for every sort of flower and perfume, and finally for three cups, which he filled, saying : ‘ O young man, ask what you wish.’ ‘ Tell her to sing these lines, O Prince of Believers :

*I warned my love to flee her, and he fled
And made his burning home with me instead ;
But though he now has done his worst to me
And though I warn again, he will not flee.’*

Short Tales of Love and Women

So Yazīd bade the girl sing those lines and then he drank, and the youth and the singer drank. He had the three cups filled again, and asked : ‘ What now ? ’ ‘ O Commander of the Faithful, bid her sing this :

*I chose a branch of arak in a garden ;
Carry it quickly, that it does not wither ;
Though Hind's not here, I pray for you God's pardon ;
Carry it quickly, ah, but whither, whither ? ’*

The Khalīfah had this song sung also, then he drank, and the youth and the singer drank. He gave orders that the three cups should be filled again, and then said to the young man : ‘ Ask what you will.’ ‘ O Prince of Believers, bid her sing this :

*My thought's a wedding, and your thought's disdain.
As Allāh lives, I shall board up this pain
As long as the moon and love shine out again.’*

Yazīd bade the girl sing this third song, but she had scarcely done so when the young man fell into a swoon. ‘ Rise and see what is the matter with him,’ said the Prince to the singer. She rose and shook him, and saw that he was dead. ‘ Weep for him,’ said Yazīd. ‘ I will not weep for him as long as you live, O Commander of

From the Arabic

the Faithful.' 'Yet weep for him ; for, if he had survived, I should not have allowed him to depart without you.' Then she wept, and the Khalifah joined in her weeping. He gave orders for the young man's funeral. At the end of a very few days the singer also died.

*Abmad al-Ibsaibī,
Kitāb al-Muṣṭatraf.*

A Bad Exchange

A MAN HAD A BEAUTIFUL WIFE; BUT ONE OF his friends told him that she was unfaithful. He put her away and married another. 'How are you getting on with the second?' his friend asked, and he replied: 'I used to eat honey with a companion, now I am eating pitch alone.'

*Ibn 'Āsim,
Hadā'ik al-azābir.*

Scandal Avoided

THE WIFE OF A CERTAIN PRIEST, WHOSE HUSBAND had died, wished to remarry; but she feared what folk might say. She took a little bell and fastened it to the neck of a cock, so that she would always know when the bird moved. People began to talk about the cock and the little bell of the widow of the priest, saying: 'Look, look at the little bell of the priest's wife on the cock's neck.' At the end of three days they ceased to talk about these things. Then she thought: 'They have spoken for three days about the cock and the little bell.' And she remarried.

K. N. Tallqvist.

Not Really Absence of Mind

A MAN BOUGHT A FISH AND TOLD HIS WIFE to make it ready, then he went to sleep. She ate the fish herself and dabbled her husband's hand in the sauce of it. When he woke, he said: 'Bring me the fish.' 'You have eaten it.' 'No, I have not.' 'Smell your hand.' The poor man did so, and then murmured: 'I have certainly eaten it, but I do not feel at all full.'

*Abmad al-Ibsaibī,
Kitāb al-Muṣṭatraḥ.*

A Call from beyond the Tomb

ABŪ HAMZAH AL KITTĀNĪ RELATES THE following anecdote: I was one of the guards of Khālid ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Kasrī, and he said one day: ‘Who will tell me a story? I feel that it might rest my heart.’ ‘I will,’ I answered. ‘Then do so,’ he said, and I began: It is related that there was once a young man of the Banu Uzrah, married to a woman of the same tribe. He was exceedingly fond of her, and she of him. One day, as he looked upon her face, he began to weep. She also regarded him and shed tears. Then she said: ‘Why do you weep?’ ‘As God lives,’ he answered, ‘if you will tell me the truth, I will tell you the truth also.’ ‘So be it,’ she answered, and he continued: ‘I was reviewing your beauty and your grace and the violence of my love for you, and then I thought that I should one day die and that you would marry another.’ ‘As Allāh lives, was that why you were weeping?’ she asked. And when he had answered that this was the true reason, she said: ‘And I was reviewing your beauty and your grace and the violence of my love for you, and then I thought that I should one day die and you would marry another.’ But the husband cried: ‘All women

Short Tales of Love and Women
would be forbidden me.' They lived together for a certain time, and then the man died and the woman was heart-broken. Her family feared that she would go mad and therefore, in spite of her repugnance, determined to marry her a second time, to see if this would console her. When the night came on which she should be led to the house of her husband, when all were resting and the women had arranged her hair, she fell into a deep sleep and saw her first husband come in by the door. 'O Such-and-Such,' he said, 'you have broken faith with me. May your life be painful.' She woke in great trouble of spirit, and ran out from the house. Her family sought her, but never heard of her again.

*Ibn Kā'im al-Jauziyah,
Aḥbār al-Nisā.*

Accepted Counsel

AL-ASMA'Ī TELLS US OF THIS INCIDENT. While I once made my ritual circlings about the Kaabah, I saw a young man performing the same duty with a basket on his back. 'You make your circlings with a basket?' I asked, and he answered: 'This is my mother; she carried me for nine months, now I am doing the same by her.' 'Shall I counsel you how to make acquittance with her?' 'How?' 'Connect with her.' 'Enemy of God,' he answered, 'how dare you give me such advice concerning my own mother?' But the old woman lifted her hand and gave her son a slap on the neck, saying: 'Why do you fly into a rage when people give you good advice?'

*Ahmad al-Shirwānī,
Nafbat al-Yaman.*

Requests of the Devil

IT IS RELATED THAT IBLĪS ADDRESSED HIMSELF to God, saying: 'Lord, you have sent me upon earth, you have driven me away, you have made a stoned one of me; give me now a dwelling.' 'Your dwelling shall be among the markets.' 'Ordain a food for me.' 'All over which men do not say My name.' 'What drink shall I have?' 'Anything which can intoxicate.' 'What muezzin shall be mine?' 'Flutes.' 'What game shall I hunt?' 'Women.'

*Abmad al-Ibshaihī,
Kitāb al-Muṣṭatraf.*

He Loved a Fancy

THE FOLLOWING TALE IS TOLD OF JĀHIZAH. He said: I once composed a book on the amusing defects in schoolmasters. Then, before it was finished, I abandoned and determined to suppress it. One day I entered a certain city and found a school there which had a master with excellent good looks. I greeted him, and he answered in the most polished style, bidding me welcome. I sat down beside him and examined him on the Korān. He showed himself word-perfect in it. Then I took him through law and grammar, metaphysics and the earliest poetic literature of the Arabs. His instruction was perfect in all these. 'By Allāh,' I said to myself, 'this confirms me in my resolution to suppress that book.' And from that time forth I saw much of the man at his school. But one day I went to see him and found the place shut. When I asked after him, I was told he was mourning for someone and had stayed at home to receive condolence. I went to his house and knocked at the door. When the servant received my name, she bade me enter. I found my friend seated upon the ground, and said to him: 'May God increase your reward in this! But there is one tender consolation which we

Short Tales of Love and Women
 have from the Prophet: *There is no soul that shall escape the taste of death.* I counsel you to patience, my friend. Is it your son who has died?' 'No.' 'Your father?' 'No.' 'Your brother?' 'No.' 'Your wife?' 'No.' 'Then what was the dead to you?' I asked, and he answered: 'She was my mistress.' 'This is the beginning of difficulties,' I said to myself, and then aloud: 'Thanks be to God, there are many women, and you will find another.' 'Do you imagine that I have seen her?' Then I thought: 'Here is the second difficulty.' 'But how did you fall in love with her, if you never saw her?' I asked, and he replied: 'I was sitting where I am now, looking out of the window. A man in a mantle passed, murmuring :

*May God, Umm 'Amr, teach you clemency.
 Give back my heart, wherever it may be ;
 Man as a toy for woman is not fit,
 You should not take my heart and play with it.*

Then I said to myself: 'If this Umm 'Amr were not the most beautiful woman in the world they would not have made these verses about her.' So I fell in love with her. And two days ago the same man passed the window, murmuring :

From the Arabic

*The ass has carried away Umm 'Amr, and she has
Never returned, and neither has the ass.*

Therefore I knew that she was dead, and put on mourning for her. I have shut the school and am now sitting in my own house to receive condolence.' 'O Such-and-Such,' I answered, 'I once composed a book concerning the pleasant deficiencies in the breed of school-masters. When I grew to be your friend, I resolved to suppress it. But now I am more than ever resolved to complete it. And I shall begin with you, if Allāh pleases.'

*Ahmad al-Ibshaibī.
Kitāb al-Muṣṭatraf.*

*The Woman whose Lamp
went Out*

IT IS RELATED THAT A MAN, WHO WAS THE most handsome of all men and whose face was a splendour, sat in the court of his house one day and saw a woman passing. She halted to look at him. 'Why do you halt, God pity you?' he asked, and she replied: 'Our lamp is out at home, but I have relighted it.'

*Abmad al-Ibsaibī,
Kitāb al-Mustatraf.*

*The Death of Two
Lovers*

KAMIL IBN AL-RADIN FELL IN LOVE WITH Asmā, the daughter of ‘Abd Allāh ibn Musāfir the Thākifite, who was his cousin. Love lived in him until he became even as a worn waterskin. His passion increased, his father spoke to the girl’s father, and the two were married. Then the dying husband was carried to Asmā’s dwelling, when he had but a single breath remaining in his body. As soon as he was brought in, he asked: ‘Am I in a place where she can hear my words?’ And when they told him that he was, he gave one sigh and died. ‘He is dead, Asmā,’ they said, and she answered: ‘As Allāh lives, I also will die. I could have gone to visit him, but a fear of my motive being suspected and of all the ugliness of slander prevented me.’ Then she fell ill and, when she was far gone, bade one of her familiar women draw the young man’s portrait, since she wished to see it before she died. This was done; and, when Asmā beheld the portrait, she hugged it, and sighed and died. They buried her in one tomb with the youth, and wrote upon it:

Short Tales of Love and Women

*They were so shy of rapture that they went
Among the tombs to practise their content.
She came too late to him, and he to her;
Joy of the tomb, that they can visit there.*

*Ibn Kā-'īm al-Jauziyah,
Aḥbār al-Nisā.*

*Check to the Pursuits of
the Jinn*

‘THERE WAS ONCE A JINNI WHO USED TO pursue me,’ says Fātimah bint al-Nu‘mān. ‘When he came, he used to hurl himself violently into the house. One day he arrived as usual, but halted on top of the wall without molesting me further. “Why are you not behaving as you used?” I asked him, and he replied: “To-day He has sent forth a Prophet, one Muhammad, and he forbids fornication.”’

*al-Damīrī,
Hayāt al-Hayawān.*

A Shameless Answer

IT IS RELATED THAT A CERTAIN MAN OF Morocco discovered his large and lusty son in commerce with his own minion. He went forth, without saying anything to the guilty parties, and spent the day in silence, lost in deep meditation. That evening, as the two were at supper, he said to his son : ‘ My child, you have read the Book ; surely you know that God has said : *Do not connect with those with whom your fathers have connected ?* ’ ‘ I beg pardon of you, O Sidi,’ answered the boy. ‘ God said : *Do not connect with women with whom your fathers have connected.* He said nothing about men.’

Ahmad ibn Bakr.



A Gallant Foiled

A CERTAIN BEAUTIFUL AND VIRTUOUS woman went out one day to go to a bath, called the bath of Manjāb. She did not know the road and therefore, when she became weary of walking and saw a man standing at the door of his house, she asked him where the bath might be. 'It is here,' he answered, and pointed out the door to her. When she had gone in, he shut the door behind her, and immediately she understood his trick. So she showed great joy and a consuming passion. 'Go and buy us perfumes and food,' she said, 'and above all hasten to return, my dear.' When he had gone forth, confident in his victory and her desire, she left the house and thus got rid of the man for ever.

*Bahā al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī,
al-Kashkūl.*

Adultery Detected

IT IS RELATED THAT AL-MANSŪR WAS SITTING one day in one of the *kubbabs* of his capital when he saw a man wandering in great affliction about the roads. He sent for him and learned, by interrogation, that he had made a successful business venture and gained a certain amount of money. He had returned home and given the gold into his wife's charge, and she had afterwards told him that it had been stolen by a thief, though he could find neither hole nor footprint. 'How long have you been married?' asked al-Mansūr. 'For a year.' 'Was she a virgin when you wed her? Had she a child by any other man?' 'No.' 'Is she young or old?' 'She is young.' al-Mansūr called for a flask of the perfume which was reserved for his own use; its scent was most exquisite and it was hard to come by. He handed the flask to the man, saying: 'Use this perfume. It will alleviate your cares.' When the husband left the Khalīfah's presence, the latter called four of his confidential police and bade them take up their positions, one at each of the four gates of the city. He made them smell a sample of the perfume, and then said: 'If any person at all passes by your post and you recognise this scent

From the Arabic

upon him, bring him to me.' Now the man had returned home and given the flask to his wife, saying : ' The Commander of the Faithful made me a present of it.' When she had sniffed at it, she sent for her lover, the man to whom she had given her husband's gold. ' Scent yourself with this,' she said. ' It is used by none but the Prince of Believers.' The man used the perfume, and then passed, in the course of time, by one of the city gates. The watcher smelt the odour upon him, arrested him, and led him into the presence of al-Mansūr, who asked : ' Where did you get that scent ? The smell is exquisite.' ' I bought it.' ' Tell me where you bought it.' Then the man began to stammer and contradict himself. Finally he betrayed himself, and was forced to restore the gold to its rightful owner.

*Ibn al-Jawzī,
Kitāb al-Aẓkiyah.*

*The Birth of al-Iskandar
and al-Khidr*

IT IS RELATED THAT THE FATHER OF AL-Iskandar (Alexander) was the most learned of all men in the science of the stars ; none had observed the heavenly vault as he had. And God postponed his death. One night he said to his wife : ‘ Insomnia is killing me. Let me rest for an hour and do you keep watch on the sky. When you see a star rising in that spot ’ —and he pointed out the place of its ascension — ‘ wake me that I may have connection with you. You will become pregnant of a son who shall live until the end of time.’ Now the woman had a sister who heard these words. al-Iskandar’s father went to sleep, and his wife’s sister watched for the star. As soon as it rose, she went and told her husband what she had heard. He had connection with her, and she became pregnant with al-Khidr, who was the maternal cousin of al-Iskandar, and his wazīr. When the astronomer woke and saw the star setting elsewhere than in the sign he had watched, he said to his wife : ‘ Why did you not wake me ? ’ ‘ As Allāh lives,’ she answered, ‘ I was ashamed.’ ‘ Do you not know that I have watched that star for forty years ? ’ said

From the Arabic

he. 'By Allāh, my life is wasted and fruitless. But, when another star rises on the track of that one, I shall have connection with you, and you will at least become pregnant with a son who shall reign over the two halves of the world.' Soon that other star rose, and the astronomer had connection with his wife. She became pregnant with al-Iskandar, who was born on the same night as his cousin al-Khidr.

*al-Damīrī,
Hayāt al-Hayawān.*

Children Held Responsible

IT IS RELATED OF ABŪ YAZĪD AL-BISTĀMĪ THAT he adored God for numberless years without finding taste or pleasure in his devotion. He went to his mother, and said to her : ‘ O mother, I find no sweetness in adoring and obeying God. Think back and see if you did not take some forbidden food while I was in your breast or you were nursing me.’ She reflected for a long time, and then answered : ‘ My son, when I was great with you, I went up on to a certain terrace and saw a tub with curdled milk in it. I felt a desire and, without the owner’s permission, ate a portion as big as an ant.’ ‘ That is the cause,’ said Abū Yazīd. ‘ Go, I pray you, to the owner of the curdled milk and tell him what you did.’ She went to the man and told him. ‘ I give you permission to eat my curdled milk,’ said the man. She returned and told this to her son, who thenceforward tasted all sweetness in obeying God.

*Abmad al-Kalyūbī,
Nawādir.*

A Woman's Two Husbands

IT IS RELATED THAT A MAN WAS SITTING AT meat one day with his wife, and that there was a roast fowl before them. A beggar stopped at the door, and the man went out and drove him away. It happened that the man who had sat at meat fell into misfortune ; his prosperity altogether left him. He put away his wife, and she married another. One day this other was sitting with her, and there was a roast fowl before them. A beggar knocked at the door, and the man said to his wife : ‘ Take him this fowl.’ She carried the fowl to the beggar and, lo, he was her first husband. She gave him the fowl and went back weeping into the house. When her husband asked the cause of her tears, she told him that the beggar was her first husband, and recounted the story of that other beggar whom he had driven away. ‘ And I,’ said her second husband, ‘ I was that beggar.’

*Abmad al-Ibsaihi,
Kitāb al-Muṣṭatraḥ.*

Excessive Discretion of a Lover

AL-ASMA'Ī TELLS US THE FOLLOWING. THERE was a young man among the Thākīfites who, though dowered with all fine qualities and very well educated, carried modesty to an insensate length. One day, as he was seated in some place, a very beautiful woman passed before him, and he could not but rise to find out who she was and where she might be going. He was taken by her, and felt a violent love rising within him. He followed her until she entered the house of his brother, whose wife she was. This thing was painful to him. He did not know what to do, and concealed his condition. His sorrow increased and he grew thinner every day. His brother and all his people were concerned about this, and questioned him, but he would tell them nothing. The brother had doctors to him and they treated him, but to no effect. At length, after all others had been unavailing against his sickness, and it increased rather than diminished, al-Hārith ibn Kaldah, an Arab physician, was called to him. He examined him and could only conjecture that the young man was in love. He took him on one side and questioned him, but the youth refused to admit

From the Arabic

anything. So the doctor, having failed in all else, began to question him concerning the names of the men and women of the tribe. The young man lay in front of al-Hārith, and every time that he spoke the name of a woman the physician glanced at his face. When he came to the name of his brother's wife, he grew stronger, he sighed; he trembled and shed tears. So al-Hārith almost learned the truth, and said to the brother: 'Go now and bring before me all the folk of your house, without forgetting a single woman or man, for I have diagnosed his sickness.' The brother went out and fetched all his people. They were assembled in a dwelling to which the invalid had been carried. 'Let not one of you, either male or female, leave this place,' said the doctor. When the young man saw his sister-in-law, his trouble lifted and al-Hārith noticed this. He called for a sheep and, after cutting its throat, drew forth the liver. This he set on the fire and afterwards gave it to the youth to eat. Then he prepared a light drink and made his patient drink of it. He continued thus for several days, increasing the amount of solid and liquid refreshment every day. The young man's condition improved, and some of his strength returned to him. When he was half-cured, al-Hārith prepared a drinking feast, and caused

Short Tales of Love and Women

both the youth and his brother to be present. As they ate and drank, the doctor companioned the brother, leaving his patient with one whom he had instructed to chant poetry to him and make him drink. 'Remember all that he says to you,' he had instructed this man. 'Tell him what you know concerning love, repeat verses to him and many tales of lovers.' When the wine began to work in the young man, he sang :

*O you whom I love, stay now and speak with me,
You have in my heart the fine and favoured place,
My cares and I are the slaves of ecstasy,
The body of him who loves is a fever case.*

In the morning al-Hārith called the man to whom he had entrusted his patient. The other told all their conversation, and recited the lines which the love-sick youth had sung to him. Then the physician summoned the brother and told him that the invalid was in love with his sister-in-law. 'Dear brother,' said the husband, 'I will separate my wife from me and you shall wed her.' Hearing this, the lover was seized with shame; he fled, and no one thereafter heard tell of him. They call him the Disappearing Thākifite.

*Ibn Kā'im al-Jauziyah,
Akhbār al-Nisā.*

A Long Shopping

GOHA GAVE THREE DIRHAMS TO HIS WIFE, saying: 'Buy some meat, and do not let the cat eat it as you did before.' She went out on this errand and met one of her lovers. He brought her to his home, but the neighbours saw them and led them before the judge. The judge ordered the woman to be mounted on a bull and led throughout all the city, as a publication of her shame. Goha at last noticed the length of her absence; he went out to look for her, and found her being led upon the bull. 'What is all this, you wretch?' he asked, and she replied: 'Go back to the house. I have now only to look through the market of the perfume-sellers and the market of the silk-merchants, then I will buy the meat and come straight home.'

Nawādir al-Khoja Nasr al-Dīn.

Ibn al-Dalū and the Two Mice

WE ARE TOLD THAT ABŪ TĀLIB, SURNAMED Ibn al-Dalū, was seated one night copying certain pages of traditions. An hour had passed since midnight. 'My hand was becoming tired,' he says, 'when a large mouse came forth and began to run about the room. After a moment another appeared, and the two played in front of me and leapt emulously, until they came into the lamplight. Then one of them dared to approach even nearer. I had a cup in front of me. Turning this over, I imprisoned the mouse inside it. Her companion came forward, smelled at the cup and then began to go round and round it, bumping against it from time to time. I, for my part, kept silence and pretended to be occupied with my copying. The free mouse then went back to its hole and soon returned, carrying a perfectly good dīnār in its mouth. This it set down in front of me. I watched in silence and then went on with my copying. The animal sat down for a short time before me and examined me closely, then it retired and fetched me another dīnār. Again it sat in front of me, and again I silently went on with my work. So the beast began a series of goings and comings until it had brought me

From the Arabic

four or five dīnārs, I do not remember which. Then it stayed looking at me for longer than before. Finally, it returned and brought me a fragment of leather, which had been the purse of the money, and left it upon the coins, as a sign that there were no more. I lifted the cup, and the two mice ran together to their hole. I took the gold pieces and spent them on some matter or other. Each of them was worth a dīnār and a quarter.'

*Ahmad al-Shirwānī,
Nafhat al-Yaman.*

A Recompense

ACCORDING TO IBN 'ABBĀS THERE WAS A great famine and dearth at Medina. Uthmān received an ass loaded with grain from Syria, and the merchants of Medina came to him in order to buy it. 'What profit will you give me?' he asked, and they replied: 'Two dirhams in ten.' 'Go higher than that.' 'Four dirhams in ten.' 'Higher.' Then they said: 'We represent all the merchants of Medina. Who could go higher?' 'God in the Highest goes higher. He gives me ten in one. I mean this food for the poor.' Ibn 'Abbās goes on to say: That night I saw the Prophet of God mounted upon a piebald horse, dressed in a mantle woven of silk and light. He was pre-occupied. 'I desire to see you,' I said, and he replied: 'O Ibn 'Abbās, Uthmān has made an alms acceptable to God. God has married him to a girl in Paradise, and we are all invited to the wedding.'

*Ahmad al-Kalyūbī,
Nawādir.*

Death through Love

AFTER ‘URWAH IBN HIZĀM HAD LEFT ‘AFRĀ bint ‘Ikāl, he gave way to his regret and died of his love for her. A troop of riders passed by the place and recognized him ; therefore, when they came to the encampment of ‘Afrā, one of them chanted in a mournful voice :

*O dwelling of indifferent people,
I tell the death of ‘Urwāh ibn Hizām.*

‘Afrā heard this, and showed herself upon a height above the caravan, crying :

*O riders urging the speed of your
horses,
Woe upon you and woe upon you !
Do you say truth
Of the death of ‘Urwāh ibn Hizām ?*

One of the horsemen answered :

*We left him in a far country, a lonely
place,
A plain and great hills.*

Short Tales of Love and Women
'Afrā replied :

*He who is dead was the star of the darkness ;
Let no young man henceforth esteem love,
Nor let the absent return in safety.
Let women forget the joys of bearing.
And as for you, O riders,
I pray you come not to the end of your journey
And that your food be savourless.*

She asked them concerning the place of 'Ur-wāh's burial and, when they had pointed it out to her, made her way towards it. When she came near, she asked to be helped down, pretending that she wished to satisfy a need. They helped her down, and she ran and prostrated herself above the tomb. Soon she gave a shrill cry, and it startled her companions ; they hurried about her and found her stretched dead over the stone of the tomb. They buried her beside her lover.

*Mas'ūdī,
The Golden Meadows.*

The Afflicted Palm Tree

I SAW IN A CERTAIN LAND TWO PALM TREES, and one of them was dead. The other groaned and wept for a long time, so that the caravans that passed drank of its tears and watered their beasts with them, thinking that they came from some hidden spring.

Nuzhat al-Udabā.

The Sheikh-al-Islām

A CERTAIN MOLLAH WAS APPOINTED SHEIKH-al-Islām in his old age, and, after the ceremony of installation, he returned home towards evening. The woman in charge of his house led him into the harīm, where, lying in a circle side by side, he found many young girls who had been sent as presents to him, according to custom, to celebrate his advancement to that holy post. ‘This one comes from the Sultān,’ said the old woman, ‘this from the Wazīr, that from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the rest from So-and-So and Such-and-Such.’ The old man admired them each in turn, then heaved a deep sigh and, producing his property, turned aside and let a stream. ‘There is nothing to be done,’ he murmured, ‘with happiness which comes after the age of sixty except to piss on it.’ This expression has passed into a proverb.

Traditional.

Punishment of a She-Monkey

A MAN OF SANĀ RELATES THAT HE ONCE passed over a mountain peak and saw a monkey sleeping there with his head in the lap of his female. The animal was deeply unconscious, and another male came and sat down in front of the two. Then the she-monkey gently set down her husband's head upon the earth and, rising, went to the other, who embraced her after the fashion of men. As soon as the first male woke and did not see his wife, he followed her tracks until he came up with her. When he was near, he smelt at her and recognised that she had committed adultery. Then he gave a great cry, and at once a crowd of other monkeys hurried about him. He let them know what the female had done. They dug a grave for her and stoned her until she was dead.

*al-Kaḥwīnī,
Ajā'ib al-Mablūkāt.*

The Forbidding of Wine

ONE DAY KAIKUBĀD, THE KING OF PERSIA, was regarding, from the terrace of one of his palaces, the green fields which lay about him, and his glance however far it journeyed met nothing but greenness. Charmed by this visible proof of plenty, he was rejoicing and feasting his eyes upon it, when he saw far off something of black upon white marring the green. The King sent a man in all haste to find an explanation of this sight, and the messenger returned, saying that a certain young man, while walking in a state of complete drunkenness from one village to another, had fallen in the field as if dead, and that a crow, lighting upon him, had torn out his eyes. Moved in the extreme by this incident, Kaikubād made a proclamation forbidding the drinking of wine and promising severest penalties to any drinker. So the people abstained from wine for a certain period. Now there came a day when a lion escaped from the menagerie, and no man might stop it or bring it back, until a certain young man passed by that way, seized the beast by the ears, mounted it as if it were an ass, and, riding it gently back, left it in charge of its keepers. This adventure was related to Kaikubād, who



MAIYAB SALAR JUNG BAHU

From the Arabic

was extremely astonished and exclaimed : ‘ This young man must be either mad or drunk.’ Then he summoned him and said : ‘ Let me know without lying how you became brave enough to mount that lion, and you shall be free from all blame.’ ‘ Know, O King,’ answered the youth, ‘ that I love one of my cousins, and that she is all the world to me. I had my uncle’s promise that she should be my wife, but he broke his word and married her to another, because of my poverty and low position. When I heard of this, I utterly despaired and was on the point of killing myself. Then my mother, who sorrowed to see me thus, said to me : “ My son, yours is a grief which could hardly be conquered by less than three cups of wine.” “ How could I drink wine,” I answered, “ now that the King has put a ban upon it ? ” Then she said : “ Drink secretly. Necessity makes the unlawful lawful. Besides, who is there to denounce you ? ” So I drank a few cups, and ate some roast meat. Then I went forth under the full impulsion of wine and youth and love, and accomplished my exploit with the lion.’ The King was astonished. He sent for the uncle and made him break his daughter’s marriage and wed her to his nephew. He attached the young man to his person, and helped him to combat his ill fortune. Then he

Short Tales of Love and Women
addressed this proclamation to his people :
' Drink wine to such an extent that you can
ride lions ; but beware of drinking it to such
an extent that crows tear out your eyes.' The
people returned to their habit of drinking wine,
but avoided going as far as absolute drunkenness.

al-Tha'ālibī.

Amorous Schoolchildren

IT IS RELATED THAT A BOY AND A GIRL STUDIED at the same school, and that the boy fell in love with the girl and at last conceived a great passion for her. Both were exceedingly beautiful. The boy was unwearying in his attentions, so that at last he became dear to her also. One day he wrote these lines on his slate :

*What do you say to him the wind
Of this forbidden love has thinned ?*

The girl took the slate, read what was written upon it, and added beneath :

*If that most passionate wind strike for our sake
We give the goal, and what comes after take.*

The master entered at that moment and read what had been written on the slate. His heart was softened, and he wrote also :

*Love forbids punishment, go to your bliss ;
I too have felt it, very like to this.*

At that minute the girl's owner came into the

Short Tales of Love and Women

classroom, found the slate, and read what all three had written upon it. Then he added these further lines :

*God, in the hardness of Your time, ah, part them not !
May he who lies about them fall and limp !
As for your venerable master, Allāh wot,
He is a very perfect gentle pimp !*

Afterwards he sent for the kādī and witnesses, and had the marriage contract of the boy and girl written at the school itself. He assigned them a pension and showered benefits upon them.

*Abmad al-Kalyūbī,
Nawādir.*

Authorised Murder

A MAN CAME TO SEEK ‘ALĪ IBN ABŪ TĀLIB AND said to him: ‘I have a wife, and every time I connect she says that I am killing her.’ ‘Go on with your murder,’ answered ‘Alī, ‘I will take all responsibility.’

*Ahmad al-Ibsaihi,
Kitāb al-Mustatraf.*

Virtue protected by Heaven

THERE WAS A CERTAIN ROBBER AMONG THE Israelites whose name was Bazin al-Manākib. He repented, and one day told men the reason for this. 'I was astounded by a woman in the outskirts of Kufah. I took my sabre and went forth at dawn. I met a water-carrier's camel and cut at its neck. Then I went towards the house of a certain woman, and climbed into her presence. I wrestled with her and could not overcome her. She refused to sin with me. So I seized my sabre with both hands and cut down with all my force upon the middle of her head and then departed. Later I told myself that I must look upon my sword work. I returned to the spot where I had stricken the camel, and it lay there with its head beside it. Then I returned to the woman's house, and heard her saying to certain others: "As Allāh lives, he struck me in the middle of the head, and not a single hair is missing."'

*Ja'far al-Kāri,
Masāri' al-'ushshak.*

An Old Woman's Thrust

A CERTAIN GREAT PERSONAGE OF BASRĀH built himself a dwelling, and in its neighbourhood stood a house worth twenty dīnārs belonging to an old woman. As he had need to enlarge his property, he offered her two hundred dīnārs for the little building. The old woman refused, and folk said to her: 'The kādī will unsuit you because of your foolishness. It is imbecile to refuse two hundred dīnārs for something worth twenty.' The old woman answered: 'Why would not the kādī unsuit a man who wished to pay two hundred dīnārs for something worth twenty?' This answer closed the kādī's mouth, and the mouths of all who were with him, and he left the old woman in possession of her house until her death.

*Bahā al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī,
al-Kashkūl.*

The Confident Husband

AT A PLACE WHERE CERTAIN FRIENDS HAD met to drink wine, one of them boasted of his wife's virtue. 'She is a cause for pride,' he said. 'She would turn aside from a male flea, and, when she gives grain to our poultry, she covers her face and breasts for fear that our cock shall see her.' 'That is too much!' cried one of his hearers, a genial man, and one much given to women. 'Will you wager that you can prove what you say?' 'I will wager that what I say is true.' 'Then let us also bet that, even if what you say is true, I will cuckold you before your very eyes.' This double wager was accepted by both and the stakes given in charge of a third party, as is the way of honest folk. Then the husband said: 'It is just time for my wife to feed the poultry. Let us go to my garden and watch through the hedge. I will prove to you that I have not lied.' So all that company, young and old, white beards and black, followed the confident husband stealthily, and soon saw the lady appear. She was veiled from head to foot, showed one eye only, and turned even that aside when the cock came up to peck at the grain about her feet. Thus the husband won the first wager. Next day, at the

From the Arabic

time of the afternoon sleep, the other party to the bet returned to that garden with two friends, carrying shovels and picks, four stakes, some cushions and a plank about the size of a coffin lid, but having a hole pierced in the centre. They neatly shovelled away a square of parsley exactly opposite the place where the woman used to come to feed the fowls. Then they dug a hole the size of the plank, planted a stake at each corner, and lined the grave with cushions. The gallant lay down and was covered with the plank ; then he pushed his most precious possession out through the hole which had been made for it. His friends carefully replaced the parsley, so that nothing of their work should appear. Then they carried away the superfluous soil, and went to keep an appointment which they had made with the confident husband. They recalled to his mind the bet of the day before and, when the time arrived for feeding the fowls, invited him to come and watch through the hedge with them. Soon the chaste matron came out of the house and began to scatter grain to right and left, with but a single eye uncovered. Yet this single eye was sufficient to let her see the gigantic circumstance which showed up so bright a red against the green of the parsley. At sight of it she advanced to the centre of the bed, lifted her clothes and sat

Short Tales of Love and Women
down, saying : ‘ God has grown this as recompense for my great chastity. Let us not despise the gifts of the Lord.’ Thus the confident husband lost the second wager.

Abmad ibn Bakr.

A Suitable Couple

AL-SHARKĪ TELLS THE FOLLOWING: AMONG the most subtle and intelligent Arabs of his time was a man called Shann. 'By Allāh,' he said, 'I will wander until I have found my equal for a wife.' As he was on his journey, he met a man and asked him where he was going. The other replied that he was going to such and such a place, naming a village to which Shann himself was making. So the two travelled together; and, as they went, Shann said: 'Will you carry me, or shall I carry you?' 'You are a fool,' the other replied. 'I am mounted and so are you; how then can I carry you or you me?' Shann fell silent, and they went on until they saw a harvest ripe for the reapers. Then said Shann: 'Do you think this harvest has been eaten or not eaten?' 'Fool,' answered the other, 'you see a harvest ripe for the reapers; how then could it be already eaten?' Shann remained silent until they were at the entrance of the village and met a funeral procession. Then he asked: 'Do you think the corpse is dead or not dead?' 'I have never in all my life met anyone as foolish as you are,' answered the man. 'You see them taking a corpse to burial and ask whether it is dead or not.' Shann fell silent and would have left his companion, but the man insisted on entertaining

Short Tales of Love and Women

him at his own house. Now Shann's host had a daughter named Tabakah, and she questioned him concerning their guest. Her father told her how they had journeyed together and, after repeating their conversation, complained of Shann's great foolishness. 'O father,' said the girl, 'this is no fool. When he asked whether he should carry you or you him, he meant would you tell him a story to shorten the way, or should he tell you one. When he asked you whether you thought the harvest had been eaten or not, he meant to ask whether or no the owners had already sold it standing and eaten the price of it. And when he spoke to you about the funeral, he meant to ask whether or no the dead man had left a posterity to keep his memory alive.' The man went out and sat down beside Shann; after chatting of this and that, he said; 'Would you like me to explain your questions?' And when Shann begged him to do so, he gave the correct explanation. 'That is none of yours,' said Shann. 'Who is the author?' 'A daughter that I have.' Then Shann asked for her hand in marriage, the man consented; and Shann took the girl into his family. When folks saw them, they used to say: 'A Tabakah for a Shann.' The expression passed into a proverb.

*al-Mufaddal,
Kitāb al-Fākhir.*

The Two Masters

ONE DAY THE DESCRIPTION OF A CERTAIN saint was given to a king of the Israelites. The latter sought out the holy man, and required that he should live at Court and keep him company. 'That is a very agreeable invitation,' answered the saint, 'but supposing you should enter the palace some day and find me enjoying myself with your daughter, what would you do?' The King flew into a rage, and cried: 'O wretch, you insult me by even saying such a thing!' To this the saint made answer: 'I already have a generous master. When he sees me commit seventy offences, he is not moved against me, he does not repulse me, he does not refuse me my daily bread. Why should I leave his Court to live in the Court of a king who is moved against me before I have committed one offence?' Then he left that king and went his way.

*Abmad al-Kalyūbī,
Nawādir.*

The Hermit's Temptation

THERE WAS A PIOUS MAN AMONG THE SONS of Israel whose name was Barsīsa. His neighbour had a daughter who fell ill, and one of his friends said to him : ‘ Carry her to Barsīsa, and let him pray for her ! ’ But Iblīs went to the holy man, whispering : ‘ Your neighbour has surely certain rights ? His daughter is ill. Would there be any harm if she were carried near to your dwelling ? You could pray God for her, and, as a reward for your long piety, who knows but that she might be cured.’ When his neighbour brought the girl, Barsīsa said : ‘ Leave her here and return home.’ So the father left her until she should be made better. Iblīs returned and insinuated to the hermit that he should have connection with her. She became with child. Then the devil—may he be accursed !—came again and said to Barsīsa : ‘ Kill her, for otherwise you will be shamed.’ He killed and buried her. Then Iblīs went and sought out the parents of the victim and told them what had happened. They ran to the holy man’s dwelling, found proof of his crime, and, seizing him, dragged him with them that he might perish. Iblīs showed himself upon the road, saying : ‘ If you bow down

From the Arabic

before me, I will save you.' Barsīsa obeyed, but Iblīs then departed from him, and the unhappy man died in his infidelity. May God of His mercy preserve us from all the wiles of the devil.

*Abmad al-Ibshaiḥī,
Kitāb al-Muṣṭatraf.*

Two Victims of Love

THE FOLK OF THE BANŪ HANĪFAH WENT TO divert themselves upon a certain mountain in their lands, and one of their young men saw a girl by the way, at whom he timidly glanced. Then he said to his companions : ‘ As Allāh lives, I will not depart from this place until I have sent her a message of love.’ They wished to dissuade him, but he refused to be turned from his purpose. Therefore the others went forward, and he stayed upon the mountain. He girt himself with his sword and walked to find the girl, whom he discovered sleeping between her two brothers. He waked her, and she said : ‘ Depart quickly, for if my brothers are roused they will kill you.’ ‘ Death would be preferable to my present state,’ he answered. ‘ But if you give me your hand to place upon my heart, I will go away.’ She gave him her hand, and he placed it upon his heart and went away. Next night he came to her again, and, when he had woken her, she said : ‘ Who made these lines :

*If you visit the folk of the girl who entrances,
Will not their gifts be daggers and sabres and
lances? ’*

From the Arabic

By this she meant to intimidate him, but he answered : ‘ It was the same man who said :

*Parting is the greatest murderer I have met ;
I who am so drowned, why should I fear to be
wet ? ’*

Then he added : ‘ If you let me have your lips to kiss, I will go away.’ She gave him her lips, and he kissed them for a moment and went away. Then the girl’s heart felt the same love that burned in his. A rumour of this adventure spread among her tribe, and her relations said to each other : ‘ Why has this debauched young man stayed in the mountains ? Let us march out against him.’ When evening came, he sat upon a little hill with his bow and arrows beside him. At nightfall rain fell upon the tribe, and they concerned themselves with him no longer. But before dawn the clouds had rolled away and the moon risen. The girl was full of passion, so she took one of her friends with her, in whom she had confidence, and went forth to seek her lover. The youth saw them coming, and thought that these were men of the tribe bent upon his destruction. He shot an arrow into the heart of the girl, and she fell dead. Her companion began to scream. So he ran down the hill and found his mistress

Short Tales of Love and Women
stricken, with the other girl near her head. He wept as a mother whose child has been taken away from her, and said these lines :

*My one chrysanthemum has been torn away by force ;
She was my society when I loathed the world and its
ways ;*

*She was my orchard and I abode there, she my water-
course ;*

*She was my hand and my strength ; my hand is weak
these days.*

The friend, who had stayed near the dead girl, then said :

*The crow with his cawing announced a thing,
He brought a destined horror on his wing.
You weep, and yet you are her murderer ;
Be patient, or else kill yourself for her.*

The young man struck himself with a knife which he had with him, and died. The folk of that tribe came up and found them, and buried them in the same tomb.

*al-Shirwānī,
Nafhat al-Yaman.*

Repugnance to Marriage

SOMEONE SAID TO A PHILOSOPHER: 'YOUR
Enemy is dead.' 'I had much rather you
had reported,' answered the philosopher, 'that
he was married.'

al-Damīrī,
Hayāt al-Hayawān.

Lukmān's Wife

THE BANŪ KARKAR TOOK REFUGE WITH LUK-mān, King of Yamen, and he married a wife from among them who was called Saudah bint Umāmah, and who was beautiful. Lukmān was jealous and established her in a great cave in the top of a high rock which none might climb. Lukmān adored God in this cave, and had a slave to fetch the people to pray there every year. He fetched the Banū Karkar to pray there, and all the men and women were grouped about him. Now al-Humaisa', who was the son of al-Sumaida, King of that tribe, saw Lukmān's wife and lusted after her. He said to his people : ' O 'Ādites, if you do not find a way for me to get what I wish from the wife of Lukmān, I shall kill him, and then the Himyarites will stamp you out to the last man.' He was audacious and fearless. When the Banū Karkar realised that he would carry out his threat if they did not comply with his wishes, they came together to think out some plan by which the lovers might meet without Lukmān's knowledge. But one of them, called 'Amr ibn Malik, addressed them, saying : ' You are ill requiting the protection you have received. You are breaking your

From the Arabic

treaty of alliance. The end will be as the beginning! There can be no safety after faithlessness, no excuse after treason, no fidelity after betrayal. If you obey this young adulterer you break down your own defences.' But they would not listen to him and continued to walk in the way of evil. 'O sons of Karkar, kill that man,' cried al-Sumaida. So they killed 'Amr ibn Malik. Then they sought Lukmān, and said to him: 'We fear that a war may be about to break out among us. If you agree, we will shut up all our weapons in this cave with you. Then, if discord arises, we will have no means of shedding blood or breaking those ties of relationship which bind us together.' 'Do so,' answered Lukmān. They wove their arms together in a pile, after setting al-Humaisa' in the midst and covering him on every side. Then they carried the whole to Lukmān, and he had it transported to his cave. As soon as he had gone forth, the lover spoke to Saudah, saying: 'I am al-Humaisa'.' She released him from where he was, and he had his will of her. She gave him to eat and drink, and then covered him again in the midst of the weapons. She continued to behave in this way until one day her lover, as he lay with her on Lukmān's bed, was compelled to spit. He shot his spit on to the roof of the cave, where it hung in two parts.

Short Tales of Love and Women

Lukmān came in almost as soon as his wife had hidden her lover, and lay down on the bed. His glance dwelt upon the roof, he saw the spit, and asked: 'Who did that?' 'I did.' 'Then spit!' She spat, but did not reach the place. 'I was sitting, not lying,' she said. 'Then sit!' She sat up and spat, but with no greater success. 'I was standing.' 'Then stand!' She stood up and spat, but fell far short. 'This came from the weapons,' said Lukmān. He went over to the sheaf of arms, opened it up and dragged forth the adulterer. He called the Himyarites together, asking: 'What is your advice?' 'Drive the Banū Karkar from the land of Himyar, for they are a perfidious and treasonable folk. Beware lest they sow their own deceit among us, lest they infect us with their hate, lest they make us the heir of their hostilities.' So Lukmān said to the Banū Karkar: 'Leave my protection!' He climbed up again to the cave and, binding Saudah and al-Humaisa' together, hurled them from the top of the rock. Then, as they lay below, he and his people stoned them.

René Basset.
Vie de Loqmān.

Causes of Scandal

IT IS RELATED THAT A MAN BOUGHT A YOUNG girl for a thousand dīnārs. One day he looked upon her and began to weep. She asked him the reason for this, and he replied : ‘ You have exquisite eyes which make me forget to adore my God.’ When he had left the house, she tore out her eyes and threw them from her. As soon as the man returned and saw her in this state, he became sorrowful and said : ‘ Why have you treated yourself thus ? You have greatly decreased your value.’ ‘ I did not wish there to be anything about me,’ she answered, ‘ which could turn you away from worshipping your Lord.’ When night came, the man heard a voice speaking to him in sleep and saying : ‘ She has decreased her value in your sight, but she has raised it in ours, and we have taken her.’ He woke, and found the girl dead, and the price he had paid for her under the pillow.

*Abmad al-Shirwānī,
Hadīkat al-Afrāb.*

Feigned Quotation

IKRIMAH TELLS US THAT ‘ABD ALLĀH IBN Rawāhah was lying beside his wife one night. He rose up to go to the privy, and there he had intercourse with one of his slaves. But his wife woke and, not finding him by her, also went out and saw him on the slave. She returned to fetch a knife, and, as he was himself returning, he met her holding it in her hand. ‘What was your object?’ he asked, and she replied: ‘My object was to kill you with this if I found you where I did find you.’ ‘And where was that?’ ‘On the slave.’ ‘I was not.’ ‘Yes, you were.’ ‘I will prove that I was not. You know that the Prophet of God has forbidden us to recite the Korān when we are in a state of legal impurity.’ ‘Then recite,’ she said, and he began:

*He has brought us the recitation of his Book,
As a dawn which rises and brings forth its light;
He has shown a straight way to our blindness,
Our hearts are assured of him;
He turns unquietly upon his bed,
His pillows are heavy with unbelievers.*

‘As Allāh lives, now I believe you,’ said his

From the Arabic

wife. 'Now I know that my eyes betrayed me.' Next day, continues ibn Rawāhah, I sought out the Prophet and told him this tale. He laughed until he showed his molars, for those verses have nothing whatever to do with the Korān.

Ibn al-Jauzī.

An Intelligent Woman

A MAN SAW HIS WIFE CLIMBING A LADDER, and cried to her: 'You are divorced if you climb up; you are divorced if you climb down; you are divorced if you stay where you are.' The woman jumped. 'May my father and my mother be your ransom!' the man exclaimed. 'If the Imām Mālik were dead, the folk of Medina should come to you for judgment.'

*Abmad al-Ibsaihi,
Kitāb al-Mustatraf.*

The Magic Tree

A WOMAN HAD A LOVER WHO SWORE THIS oath: 'If you do not find some way for me to couple with you in your husband's presence, I will never speak to you again.' The woman promised to compass it, and they agreed upon a day. There was a high palm tree near the house, and the woman said to her husband: 'I want to climb that tree and pluck the fruits myself.' When she was at the top of the palm, she looked down on her husband, and cried: 'O adulterer, who is that woman with you? Woe, woe! Are you not ashamed to couple with her before my eyes?' She began to scream and curse at him, while he protested that there was no one with him and that he was alone. Then she climbed down and continued her reproaches, while he swore by the oath of divorce that there had been none there but himself. Then he said: 'Sit here while I climb up.' When he was at the top of the tree, she called to her lover and he coupled with her. 'May I be your ransom!' called down the husband. 'You are no more guilty than I was. Whoever climbs this palm would see what I see.'

*Ibn al-Jauzī,
Kitāb al-Azkiyāh.*

*A Woman's Character In-
fluences that of her
Husband*

THERE LIVED AT THAT TIME A MAN WHO WAS five hundred years old ; his son was four hundred, and his grandson three hundred. We sought out this last, telling ourselves that his wit and intelligence would be the greatest, but we found him entirely obtuse, knowing neither good nor evil. So we said : ‘ If it is thus with the youngest, what will be the condition of the father and the grandfather ? ’ We went to the man who was four hundred years old, and found him somewhat nearer to intelligence than his son. Then we visited the old man of five hundred, and found that his wit and power of thought were perfectly healthy. We questioned him concerning his son and his grandson, and he replied : ‘ The young one had a wife of most displeasing character ; she never agreed with him in anything. Her narrow outlook and the long time he had to put up with her influenced my grandson for the worse. My son’s wife was sometimes in agreement with him, sometimes in disagreement ; that is why he is a little more intelligent than the other. I myself have a wife who

From the Arabic

agrees with me and helps me in everything.
That is why my powers of thought are quite
intact.'

*al-Kazwīnī,
Athār al-bilād.*

A Strange Reason for Love

‘WHY ARE YOU SO FOND OF YOUR HUSBAND?’ a woman asked her daughter. ‘Once,’ answered the girl, ‘he returned from a journey and, still dressed in his travelling clothes, opened my door and came in and began upon the act of love. I was suffering from a fever at the time, my body was burning and my hair quite in disorder; I had had no time to scent myself. Yet, in spite of all this, I saw him come to me in a full ardour of passion and attack me violently. It was because of that proof of love that I so grew to care for him.’

Ahmad ibn Bakr.

NOTE

THESE tales are collected and translated from various European sources, but my introduction to a great many of them I owe to M. René Basset's unique anthology, *Mille et un Contes, Récits et Légendes Arabes*, which is still appearing. Though I have, even when using M. Basset, gone back wherever possible to the first European versions, I have also in several instances translated from his own agreeable French. His eclectic volumes are a rich treasury. These tales and traits and anecdotes are discussed in my terminal essay, and to it I must refer any reader who objects to the difference in tone between the various items. They will be found, I think, to be embraced by somewhat of a sexual synthesis.

